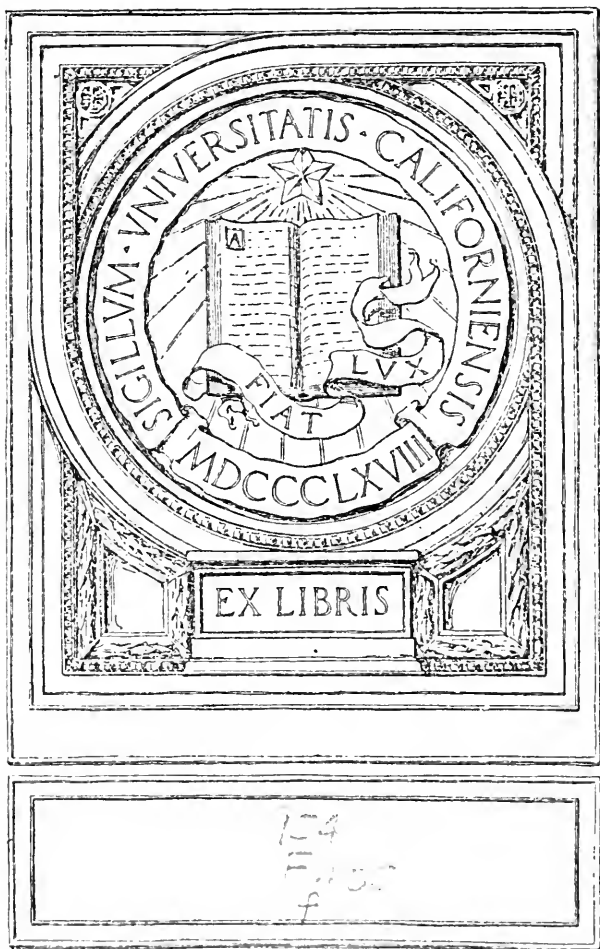


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THE FATHER'S TRAGEDY.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

LOYALTY OR LOVE?

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THE FATHER'S TRAGEDY.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

LOYALTY OR LOVE?

BY

MICHAEL FIELD,

Author of "Callirrhoe and Fair Rosamund."

London:
GEORGE BELL & SONS,
YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

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J. BAKER & SON.

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CALLIRRHÖE: FAIR ROSAMUND.

By MICHAEL FIELD.

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→* OPINIONS † OF † THE † PRESS *←
ON THE FIRST EDITION.

From the "SATURDAY REVIEW."

"IT is many years since we have read a new poem so instinct with the immutable attributes of poetry, so free from current cant and trick, and animated by an inspiration so warm and native and unfailing. The drama, though classic in subject, is modern in form, and almost denuded of lyrical ornament. There is no chorus and there are no experiments in Greek metres. Still more characteristic is the interpolation of certain humorous scenes conceived in the wanton spirit of the Elizabethan drama; and, underlying all, runs an eccentric vein of fateful irony, which affords the most individual expression of the author's genius. . . . This bald outline of the action of course only indicates the leading *motif* of the drama, the virtue and power of love's sacrifice; it must be left to the reader to enjoy the skill with which the dramatic conduct is evolved, the beauty of the conception of the drama, the strength and purity of the language, and the brilliant distinction and consistent development of the chief characters. In 'Fair Rosamund' are several scenes worthy of comparison with the most striking in 'Callirrhöe,' though the drama is less comprehensive in projection; not less certainly than the latter does it prove Mr. Field to be a poet of notable endowments and distinguished powers."

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A

From the "SPECTATOR."

"THESE poems are poems of great promise ; . . . we have found a wealth of surprises in the strength, the simplicity, and the terseness of the imaginative feeling they display, that convinces us of his power to do much more than he has here done,—though even that is no trivial beginning. . . . If that has not the true poetic fire in it,—dramatic fire, too, as well as poetic—the present writer must be destitute of all discernment. To him it sounds like the ring of a new voice, which is likely to be heard far and wide among the English-speaking peoples."

From the "ATHENÆUM."

"THE writer undoubtedly possesses the two qualities absolutely essential to all dramatic writing—those of being able to create and to make the creations express themselves with the terse and vivid expression which, by a happy epithet, at times lays bare an entire condition of mind. . . . Very striking, despite a false note or two, and showing something almost of a Shakespearian penetration into a half-human nature, is the scene between Machaon and the Faun."

From the "ACADEMY."

"MR. FIELD is very clear as to his message. He sings the glories of enthusiasm, and preaches the gospel of ecstasy to an old chiller-minded world. It is not often, in modern English verse, that we light upon a book so genuinely romantic. The scorn of *bourgeois* common-place, the *naïf* young hatred of 'the lame creature, custom,' the urgent battle waged against routine in these plays, with their fresh poetic ring, belong to another age than ours. . . . It will be seen that here is a young writer, with plenty of convictions and plenty of courage. In addition, we may credit him with a fresh gift of song, a picturesque and vivid style, as yet without distinction or reserve."

From "The TIMES."

'WILL Mr. Field become a poet in the sense in which the title is rarely granted? Perhaps—' *Il ne faut plus qu'un pas; mais c'est là où je t'attends.*'"

From the "DAILY NEWS."

"THE Author is to be congratulated on the promise, and even to a great extent on the performance, of 'Callirrhoë.' One cannot read the book without saying, 'This is poetry in places, and everywhere is far above the level of the verse maker.' . . . It will be very interesting to watch the future literary fortunes of 'Michael Field.' "

From the "PALL MALL GAZETTE."

"MR. FIELD's first and longest play . . . is by no means the best, though it has merits. The second, 'Fair Rosamund,' has real power. The scenes in which Eleanor encourages the dissension and disobedience of her sons, are more like the work of the minor Elizabethans than the similar work of any recent writer, except the late Mr. Horne. . . . A man who can write as follows ought to do something:—

Now I can see their scrimpèd kirtles green,
And swinging beads of dew about their necks,
They've not the pretty caps of midsummer,
Poor midges—only cowslip bells, o'er-young,
That fall at every jerk; and dirty cups
From acorns of last year.
I'll make my tiny peakèd bonnets red,
And see if they will pick 'em from the twigs.

We do not think Drayton would have refused to sign this. Indeed, the whole piece is very interesting, especially if compared with Mr. Swinburne's too little known juvenile work on the same theme. Mr. Field has a less original and masterly command of verse than Mr. Swinburne then showed, and much less splendour and variety of diction; but his work is, perhaps, more directly human, and therefore more dramatic in interest, and his touches of nature are more spontaneous, and less weakened by dwelling on them."

From the "SCOTSMAN."

"A WORK not only of remarkable promise, but of notable performance as well. . . . In 'Fair Rosamund' Mr. Field has chosen a theme that has become hackneyed in dramatic poetry. Yet the airy freshness and

bloom, which are the great charms of his classic play, are as noticeable here ; and it also exhibits not less his strength in character drawing and his facile management of blank verse metre. In both poems there is that ethereal quality that distinguishes what is poetry from what is not ; and they will raise keen expectation regarding what else their author may have to offer to the world."

From the "YORKSHIRE POST."

" 'CALLIRHOË and Fair Rosamund' . . . are powerful, unique, and such as an author may be heartily congratulated upon, but they give us the impression of buds rather than full blooms. The man who wrote these two poems will yet write more fully and adequately for the complete rounding of a theme—at least we hope so ; or his own work's good promise will be broken. With more freedom, more fulness, with better form, . . . the author, we are sure, could adequately portray tragedy either for the stage or the study."

From the "LIVERPOOL MERCURY."

"BIRTH-MARKS of the tragedist—so conspicuously absent from even such masterly works as the Laureate's 'Harold' and 'Queen Mary,' are unmistakably visible in these two short and in many ways imperfect poems. . . . A great altitude of passion is scaled in this scene. . . . The Queen is conceived in somewhat Marlowesque fashion. She is not of humanity, but of the Eumenides. . . . A really imaginative creator . . . will often make his dialogue proceed by abrupt starts, which seem at first like breaches of continuity, but are in reality true to a higher though more occult logic of evolution. This last characteristic we have remarked in Mr. Field, and it is one he shares with Shakespeare."

From "HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE."

"MR. FIELD has a voice of his own, whatever his sins of literary omission or commission, . . . a style which certainly possesses the rare merit of striking one as original and poetic."

And numerous lengthy and favourable reviews in other Journals.

THE FATHER'S TRAGEDY.



“Poscia, più che il dolor, potè il digiuno.”

Dante. Dell' Inferno, Canto xxxiii. 75.

“ who die really of hunger, in
common language, ‘of a broken heart.’ ”

Goldsmith.

PREFACE.

WHEN a child, the author read the history of Robert III. in Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*. Even in those early days he felt an intimation that he was consecrated and condemned to hold up the mirror of ideal presentation to the actual pity and terror of that history. The time came for the fulfilment of his task, and he spared no trouble to gain from chronicler and historian the veritable facts he would reflect in his tragedy.

Wyntoun (from whose rhymed vernacular chronicle the character of Rothsay is drawn), William Bower, the continuator of Fordun's *Scotichronicon* (on whose narrative the drama is mainly founded), Boece (who supplies an incident of Act IV.), Lord Hailes (who first printed the Remission given to the Duke of Albany and the Earl of Douglas), Tytler, Pinkerton, Burton, all lend authority to his work. Those who have studied the obscure reign of Robert III. will observe, without anger, certain deviations from authority, where the freedom of imagination claimed its rights. Sir Walter Scott himself, in his romance, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, has treated many of the incidents of this reign with a boldness that well-nigh obliterates historic outline.

If it be thought that the author is stern in showing Misery

her own feature, Weakness her own image, and Hunger his form and pressure in the glass of this drama, his best defence is the self-suggested epitaph of the man who is its protagonist :—

“ Hic jacet Pessimus Rex et Miserrimus
Hominum in Universo Regno.”

November 24th, 1884.

PROLOGUE.

THEY who would lift the heavy tragic pall
Upon the groaning shoulders of their Muse
Have ever warned the light and easy-soul'd,
Who shun the joyless truth in human things,
To fly her pitiful, dread company,
And seek some sister with leaf-knotted lyre,
And garments gaily dancing in the wind.
So be they warned ; for on the sheer descent
And downward of this father's destiny
Is scarce a ledge for Hope the climber's foot
To cling to, trembling at the chasm hoar.
Who, peering, pass that brink are travellers
To a mid-gulf of misery from whence
There is no looking back : when parents err
Nothing avails ; there is no comforter.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ROBERT III. (JOHN), *King of Scotland.*

DAVID, DUKE OF ROTHSAÿ, } *sons to King Robert.*
JAMES, EARL OF CARRICK, }

ROBERT, DUKE OF ALBANY, *brother to King Robert.*

ARCHIBALD, EARL OF DOUGLAS,
GEORGE DUNBAR, EARL OF MARCH,
THE EARL OF ORKNEY,
THE EARL OF BUCHAN,
SIR WILLIAM LINDSEY,
SIR JOHN RAMORGNY, } *Scotch noblemen.*

WALTER, } *Boon companions to the Duke of Rothsay.*
RANDOLPH, }
RALPH, }

ALLAN, *faithful servant to King Robert.*

A PRIOR.

AN OLD LUNATIC.

MARJORIE, *daughter to the Earl of Douglas.*

ELIZABETH, *daughter to the Earl of March.*

EMMELINE, *an armourer's wife.*

A COUNTRY WOMAN.

HOSTESS OF A TAVERN.

Councillors, women, citizens, monks.

SCENE.—*Stirling; removed during the action to Falkland Castle and neighbourhood, Edinburgh, and the Castle of Rothsay in Bute.*

Figure 1 is a 2D scatter plot showing the frequency of the number of nodes in the largest component of a network. The x-axis is labeled 'Number of nodes in the largest component' and ranges from 0 to 100. The y-axis is labeled 'Frequency' and ranges from 0 to 10. The plot shows a distribution of points representing different network realizations, with a peak around 20-30 nodes.

THE FATHER'S TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Stirling. A Courtyard. Enter King Robert and Allan.*

King Robert. A sunny day !

Allan. Rain will be dew to-night.

King Robert. A prophet with a voice blows no man good !
How sweet the sunshine presses on my brow,
Gently rebuking wrinkles ! There's the warmth
Of a young hand in 't. Here is company—
My brother !

[*Enter Albany, Prior, Councillors. Allan withdraws.*]

Albany. Grant us private audience.

King Robert. I think I hear your words within your face,
It says displeasure plainly. Some new lapse
O' the reckless boy ?

Albany. Would he had ne'er been born
To pay dishonour as the price of life
He drew from regal loins. His folly grows
To sinful ripeness.

1st Councillor. Which we cannot check.

King Robert. You who are strong and wise !

2nd Councillor. In vain, my liege,
Are strength and wisdom ; for the prince whose charge
And government you laid upon our love,

Is hard against our influence, and rears
 Against our slightest check ; mocks at the vow
 That pledged him to our guidance ; in our sight
 Is boldly riotous and full of jest,
 Railing derision, scorn unsuitable.
 No pow'r on earth can bend him to the grace
 Of honest manners and sobriety.

Prior. No pow'r on earth ! True, true ! But from the
 heavens

Stream counsel and a strength ineffable ;
 These have been uninvoked. My gracious liege,
 Your son is left unfostered by the Church,
 A heathen and a heretic.

King Robert. Your words
 Astound my conscience, prior ; on my soul,
 He goes with me to chapel oft and oft.

Prior. To mock his God with wandering eyes and lips
 That whisper Belial's accents, or the sneers
 Of anti-Christ. His thoughts are deadly, vile
 With most pernicious modern heresy.

King Robert. I cannot take his thoughts upon my soul ;
 His deeds too much afflict it. I must speak
 At every moment words of reprimand
 That shake my courage ; I must ever dread
 Some new occasion for my wearied blame ;
 Oppose reproof to laughter ; beat my ease
 To hateful effort ; tear from off mine eyes
 The hood that Love hath made to darken them
 From sight of his offence. I cannot take
 The other burden of his lawless mind.

Prior. You are unworthy then to bear the name
 That ties the young man's fate upon your care.
 You put his education in the hands
 Of these strong barons and grave councillors,
 Because you fear'd the weakness of your love
 Might prove his ruin. Ill you thought ; for fear
 Prepares not for calamity. These men,

Of sober worthy living, gracious rule,
 And rigid will, confess their discipline
 Is brought to scorn, and wherefore? O my liege,
 You gave away the office and command
 That's natural to your paternity
 Through dread, which brought as its accomplishment
 The very harm you imaged; for your son
 No longer bows to that revered control
 Which is the father's blest prerogative.

King Robert. Was I to blame? His wild, defiant youth
 Was motherless, and I, bereft of wife,—
 I could not draw stern prompting from her grave
 Who loved him with a sacred gentleness
 That won his wayward years to her sweet rule.
 Our children are her monument, the sign
 That once she lived, her epitaph that's writ
 On the fair living tablets that she wrought,
 My love's memorial and effigy.

Prior. Keep pure from stain of schism and of sin
 These relics—these inscriptions to your love.

King Robert. I have, I have!

Prior. But duty, like the sea,
 Flows not away, but ever back returns,
 Set to the same attempt.

King Robert. I would the boy
 Were like his brother!

Albany. Pooh, that does not help.

King Robert. We call our children ours—yet in my son
 There's something of a stranger, and 'tis hard
 To play the host; he is so much unlike
 All that I ever was. I think you spoke.

Albany. My duty speaks his folly and offence,
 Else were I gladly silent.

King Robert. Albany,
 I knew it; 'twas your love and vigilance
 That roused my tardy fears.

Albany. You have an eye

Too kindly, of too dove-like quality,
To see where carrion stinks ; less fortunate,
There's eagle in my ken.

King Robert. Ah, when you spoke,
I found I knew my son but in a mist.
What's to be done, unless we put his case
Into fair hands ?

Albany. Ha ?

King Robert. Then you've never thought
Of marriage ?

Albany. No.

King Robert. 'Tis thither that I look
With confidence for help, and I am bent
On seizing all within the realm of Hope.
You doubt a last success ?

Albany. I do. Ah, well !
You've found the woman ?

King Robert. No ; I lack advice.

Albany. Leave me to choose ; I have a keener sight
For that in human beings over which
Flow action and expression like a stream—
The veiled and solid stuff.

King Robert. Let's go within—
The sun is hot !—and talk of this at length.
David is so unlike me !

[*Noise without.*]

Albany. There's his laugh !
Oh, every fool has bells within his mouth !

[*Exeunt.*]

[*Enter Rothsay, Ramorgny, Walter, Ralph, Randolph, and others ; Huntsmen carrying a stag before them.*]

Rothsay. I'm hungry. Let us dine !
Bear forward to the cook, mine honest friends.
I'll lie upon this golden cloth of light
The sun has thrown upon the ground, and wait
Your festal summons.

[*Exeunt Huntsmen.*]

Walter, couch you here.
Ramorgny here—for every one a place.

Now is it not delightful to be young—
 The friend of every element? Old age
 Faints under heat, and trembles in the blast,
 Withers with cold, and aches with rainy air ;
 But sun and wind and ice and storm to us
 Are Nature's boon companions. While I think
 Of other blessings, Walter, do you praise
 King Youth with opening buds about his crown.

Walter [sings].

Who hath ever given
 Cupid's head white hair,
 Or hath put our roses
 Under the snow's care?
 If such fool there be,
 We'll cry him God's mercie !

Ralph. Bravo !

Rothsay. Good Walt, thy merry voice is dry—
 A stream that suffers drought. Let's have a stoup ;
 We need not wait for dinner.

Randolph. Nay, I'll go. *[Exit.]*

Ramorgny. Ha, ha ! Now speak your praise.

Rothsay. Right joyfully,

For everything is joyful when we're young,
 Immediately, fully. To old men
 There's no direct and steadfast joyousness
 In flow'rs o' spring ; they ever see them fade,
 Not sharing with them, as we do, the time,
 The freshness, the astonishment. In vain
 The tide of vintage strives to loose and float
 Their moor'd and creaky passions ; emulous,
 We dip elastic prows in seas far off.
 Their bond of friendship is grey Memory ;
 But ours is golden Hope, which gathers up
 A large companionship among ourselves,
 And all things in the world, which be it night
 Or winter have assurance of the day

Or spring to come : this crabbèd sires forget,
And dispraise Nature with their melancholy.

[*Re-enter Randolph with wine.*]

Ramorgny. Here come the beakers !

Rothsay. Let us drink to Youth !

We're mortal in this world when it is gone,
Immortal Youth !

Walter. I pledge your dark hair and I pledge your light ;
Down with the parti-colour'd and the white !

Rothsay. Here's to your hairless chin !

Ramorgny. To yours, and yours !

[*They drink.*]

Randolph. We've magpies in yon elm that tops the wall ;
One !

Walter. That's ill-luck, my stars !

One, two,—no, three !

Ralph. A marriage ! that's of merrier import.

Ramorgny. Ugh ! there's a fourth !

Mercy ! a burial !

[*Re-enter Albany.*]

Rothsay. Ha, ha, ha !

Walter. Ho, ho !

Albany. What are you doing ?

Rothsay. Sitting i' the sun.

Who'll be a dog to lend my uncle eyes ?

It seems he hath infirmity of sight.

Albany. 'Tis that way lies your weakness. You I see
Couch'd here amid a litter of low churls,
Swilling untimely wine, whose place is set
Scarce lower than the throne by Scotland's voice
Calling you Regent, and endowing you
With pow'r unnatural to thwart the will
Of your anointed king and natural sire.
A senseless boy, you think to drive the steeds
Of sovereignty and never hold a rein ;
Nor will you listen to the words of those

Whom Age hath taught—the folly of stiff youth
That will not work its lessons by our lips.

Rothsay. Now look you here, friends, and I'll tell you
this,—

Poor Youth was never yet judged by its peers ;
Such have no judgment, and its case is left
To elders, who once shared its thoughtlessness,
But now look on with sharp intolerance,
And brand it to the world. 'Tis true enough
That summer recks not of the winter's cold.
But winter's store would ne'er be harvested
Save for the fiery sunshine of past days.
And so with your experience, wise-head !

Albany.

Hum !

Float to destruction ! I have done my part,
Nor can be pilot to unyielded bark ;
Run on the reefs I know and breast the waves
That draw you to a whirlpool in my chart !
I've done with you.

Rothsay.

Dismissal to us, lads !

You 're strangely still—

Come, let me hear your lips ; come, make a noise,
And raise the cur's-tail droop about your heads !
His tongue will lash no more. Get up ! There's Meg
Calls us to venison and smoking cheer.
Lass, I must meet these heralds.

[*Kisses her.*

To the feast ! [*Exeunt.*

Albany. And such a bubble of humanity
Must keep me from the throne and float between
Me and the Regency ! He lives a life
Blown out of pleasure's mouth and woven all
Of ardent feebleness—the chosen stuff
On which the senses paint their fickle will
In colours of the rainbow. I've a storm
Within could burst this gay impediment
Should it but reach him. Time will settle *that*.
Now to the point ! He must be married—so !

I'll have his full price in the treasury
 Before I see him husband. Many lords
 Would buy his hand for daughters of their house
 With offers of much gold. Who offers most
 Shall have the worthless goods.

[*Enter the Earl of March.*]

Greeting ! You're brief,

And conversation is an enemy
 For sword-cuts of your tongue. I'm not a man
 Who loves a marshall'd troop of many words,
 Hence will I strike the very eye of aim.
 The king—this know I from his private speech—
 Seeks for his son a bride ; but since his chests
 Are ebbing in their golden property,
 He cannot deck a marriage with due pomp
 And suitable festivity. I pray
 Your counsel in this matter.

Earl of March. 'Twould be worth
 Some paltry gold to have a future king
 For son-in-law. I'd give it.

Albany. No, you jest.

Earl of March. I'd give two thousand pounds.

Albany. Well, well !

Earl of March. You mark ?
 Two thousand pounds to heap the treasury.
 You understand me ?

Albany. Yes. We need no words.
 Lady Elizabeth is queen to be,
 As I am Albany and she your child.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The same. A Room. Enter Douglas.*

Douglas. Shall March be grandsire unto future kings,
 And Douglas carry no emblazon'd fruit
 On any of his branches ? Question vain !
 For Douglas in his issue shall be crown'd
 Maternal ancestor of royalties.

Proud March, secure in fancy of his prize,
 The money for its purchase in his clasp,
 Shall find himself outwitted by mere gold,
 When offered by my hand and double-heap'd.
 The heir of Scotland mated to his house !
 Not so ! I'd rather beg my weary bread ;
 At March's doggish portal show my scars ;
 Shoot out my lips in kisses to the foot
 Of his new-honour'd daughter. By Saint Bride,
 This gold—sun-counterfeiting coin, with stamp
 Of sovereignty, the even round of Heav'n
 Is bare of—this shall turn her day to night,
 And wrap her pride in heavy lethal shroud.

[*Enter Marjorie Douglas.*]

This is your dowry. 'Tis a mighty pile !

Marjorie Douglas. My father, who hath sought my
 hand?

Douglas. No man.

Marjorie Douglas. Then, prythee, wed me to no airy
 boy,

That giggles at his mistress and his clothes,
 His foolish quips, the serious round of things
 He takes for jests of God to move his sides.
 Beseech you, spare me that.

Douglas. Lo and behold
 Your suitor in this gold.

Marjorie Douglas. I take it, sir.
 I'd rather clasp it than a tricksy hand
 That's current with all maidens.

Douglas. You divine
 It is the Prince of Scotland you must wed ?

Marjorie Douglas. David of Rothsay—sweet and young
 and fair,
 Cunning in literature, a seemly form
 And able head, they say ; but unto me
 No more than the cold vision of a dream.

Douglas. To-night he'll be your husband, and your arms

Fold as warm guardians round no chilly shade
Or distant apparition.

Marjorie Douglas. On my knees
I pray you save me from the keen disgrace
Of being called his wife. He never looks
With any favour on me, who is free
Of loving graces to all loveliness.
My father, I should hate to be his bride ;
Yea, loathe it to the centre of my soul.

Douglas. My daughter shall obey me. Never yet
Hath woman of my house been obstinate
Against a father's life-controlling will.

Marjorie Douglas. In all things I obey you, for my blood
Instructs me in that duty. Yet my veins
Are now the scene of struggle 'tween your will
And mine that is against it. You are old,
A warrior, a parent, and you win.

Douglas. Go, get you dress'd, for I must seek the king.
Put on your best array, nor set your lips
To such a bitter aspect. Get you back.

[*Exit Marjorie Douglas.*

I'll move the will of Albany ; that done,
The king is willing and the prince my son. [*Exit.*

[*Enter on the other side Lindsey and Ramorgny.*]

Ramorgny. I note that you are sad.

Lindsey. How else, i' faith !

My daughter, my Euphemia, is dead.
The prince once bound him to her gentle love,
Forgot it or was turn'd by force of State
From truth and honour. Sweetly hath she died,
Love's flower that when the fust'ring sun withdraws
Dies patiently uncolour'd of its joy.

Ramorgny. Alas, a careless freak to dim her life !
He thought she had forgotten him, nor slipt
One gleam to where she pined. I never dreamt
She held him bound. 'Twas but a passionate
First fancy of his boyhood.

Lindsey.

These are words.

No injur'd breast is home to loyalty.

But I forgot you're of his company.

I bid you straight good morning.

[*Exit Lindsey.*]*Ramorgny.*

So it is.

I'll treasure his offence among my store

Of hoarded secrets ; like a bunch of keys

Such dangle at the belt of policy.

I'd move the prince against his uncle, such

My present plot, for I am dear to him ;

And if his youth could crush down Albany,

I should be foremost in the rank of men.

What could incite him more or fiercelier

Than traffic of his choice in marriage ; this,

They say, is sold from March to Douglas, sold

By Albany for treasure—so the men

Of Douglas whisper, and I'll raise their voice

Until it reach the boy's dishonour'd ears.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*A Council-chamber. King Robert, Albany, and Douglas.*

Albany. My lord of Douglas offers to the state

Twice March's sum to have a marriage tied

Between his daughter and your son and heir.

King Robert. How, brother? when my son is fast
betrothed

To March's daughter and his holy vows

Beyond a shameless purchase ! [*Aside.*] Oh, I fear

That furrow in the black earl's heavy brow

Where cuts the plough-share of an iron wrath.

Douglas. My lord the king . . .*King Robert.*

Good earl, I am distraught,

Nor fully know what you would have me do.

Douglas. Sanction another marriage for your son

With one who springs from truer loins than his

Who hath forestall'd my offer—from a house

Most tried and loyal, with the purple dye
Of regal blood superb within its veins.
The faith of March is but a fungus growth,
A recent wat'ry issue of his lands,
The increase of a day, the slipp'ry spoil
Of tardy, smiling favour ; but my truth
Is rooted on the centuries and fed
With ancient honours and continued grace.

Albany. My lord of Douglas, I will plead your case.
You know, my liege, the prince's hand was bound
To March's daughter on a promise rich
Of treasure to the sore-impoverish'd State.
Now comes my lord of Douglas, fired to join
With sacred bond his dear paternal love
And cherish'd loyalty ; in lavish mood
He gives a double treasure to our chests
For sake of that which sluggish March obtains
With half this eager offer. Shall we starve
The gaping treasury and cheat the thin
And lacking realm thro' terror of a knot
But tied with words ? Nay, rather we must stab
The empty heart of language—a mere vow,
And rend it into nothing.

King Robert [aside]. O my soul !
He ever reasons conscience out of me
With higher goodness than my frailty owns !—
You urged me thus to move the highland clans,
Chattan and Kay, upon the Inch of Perth,
Before my face, in midst of festal pomp,
To fall upon each other like wild beasts,
And tear the crimson life as trophy out
Of eight and fifty corpses. Albany,
Through all the years until my dying day,
Mine eyes will see the sight they sicken'd from
Even to blindness. God hath planted it
Before the steadfast mirror of my soul
That cannot blink ; so there is no relief.

You said it was for safety of my land.

Albany. Ay, so I said, and so it proved, my liege.
Your lowlands lie in rip'ning repose,
And harvesters, with sickles round the neck,
From brown lips bless my counsel.

King Robert. Christian deeds
Are said to lay a peace upon our souls
Like hush of snow : the virtue which you preach
Tears like a howling tempest, sharp and foul.
One falls a blessing, and one roars a ban ;
Yet both are righteousness and both of God !
Help me, ye heavenly pow'rs !

Albany. Alas, on earth
The choice is often between good and good,
Not good and evil ; hence a struggle scars
The upright, tender conscience that must turn
Its back upon some part of righteousness
To face a fuller portion. So a king
For sake of those he rules must bear a strife
Between the holy teachings of his heart
And holier duties of his crownèd head.

King Robert. Yes, you are right. The gold upon my brow
Hath often bought the voice within my breast.
Proceed ! This contract split, do you not fear
The wrath of March ? Methinks it might so rage
Our coffers would be emptier than ere
Lord Douglas filled them, and we broke our word.
There lies the pinch of conscience.

Douglas. Choose your foes—
The fickle March or staunchest Douglas ! Choose
To tie me closer to your love, or break
The bonds of fealty my injured pride
Would burn to carry.

Albany. Think of it, my liege—
Lord Douglas is the pillar of the realm ;
His pow'r the very dais of your throne.

King Robert. Good cousin Douglas !

Albany. Brother, I have urged
 The harsh and stinging duty of a crown ;
 A sweeter reason waits for utterance,
 Private, paternal. Ofttimes have we mourn'd
 The free, immodest living of your son ;
 We dreamt of marriage as a bond to clasp
 His vagrant love and fancies wandering.
 For this the woman of our choice should bear
 A firm and constant nature, little touch'd
 With fickle luring passion and mere grace
 Of colour'd beauty. Such are threads of silk ;
 We seek for chains infrangible and sure.
 Slender and soft is March's daughter, trick'd
 With cloying charms ; but strong and proud of heart,
 Solemn in years and grave in countenance
 Is Marjorie of Douglas, framed to curb
 Ill-mannerly approach, and turn to shame
 The levity of green unbridled youth.

[*Enter Rothsay.*]

King Robert. David ! I shrink to meet his glance.

Albany.

How now,

Lord Regent, that you break upon us thus ?
 We rarely see you at the council-board.
 Your seat is yonder.

Rothsay. In the market-place
 Slaves stand for sale. I will not sit ; I'll stand
 In purchasable shame before you all
 Who bargain for my manhood ; stand and watch
 My father sell the birthright of my flesh ;
 Yea, stand and bear a sacrilege my youth
 Must damn itself to credit.

King Robert. David, peace !

Rothsay. God ! I am faint with insult, and the thought
 I had of my own self is sick to death ;
 I'm wounded in a place no tears can wash,
 Outraged beyond the surgeon's knife of speech ;
 I cannot lift the colour to my face,

For shame is so ashamed that she has fled.
Hucksters !

King Robert. Oh, silence !

Rothsay. Nothing glorious

Is marketable—fame, nor love, nor deeds
Of any virtue, youth nor happiness ;
Nothing, oh nothing, but the meanest things
Of which I am the meanest. On my soul,
You drag me in the dirt and there I'll lie
And dash it in your faces ; [*to King Robert*] ay, in yours.
'Tis well you are my elders ; if you were
My age, I hardly think that I could bear
To leave you living.

Albany. Wherefore all this noise
And rampant passion ? We would understand
The tossing cause thereof.

Rothsay. Speak it ! Oh no !
'Twould want an old and worldly merchant, one
Who has a counting-house. I'm still a prince
About the lips, nor know your tricks with coin,
Your sales of man for woman, your low truck
And miserable frauds. You've ruin'd me,
And thrown my youth down to the bottom step
Of Pride's high stairs. I'll never climb again.

Douglas. Now by Saint Bride . . .

Rothsay. Prate not of brides to me in holy terms,
Ye cursèd purchasers of manhood's fame !
A bride ! A mistress owning whom she serves,
The handmaid to her lackey hired with gold !
A sanctified and blessèd state, my lords !

King Robert. David ! It is not so. . . . At least——

Rothsay. It is.

King Robert. For your sake and the country's . . .

Rothsay. I must wed

The wither'd lass of kind Earl Archibald.

Douglas. Sir David, Duke of Rothsay . . .

Rothsay. Bear her tongue,

Which nips the meanest bud that Love can grow.

Albany. Nephew, these words are childish ; this the
rage

Of young and milky feeling, when the tough
And unfamiliar bread of this world's life
Forces soft inclination from its pap
And diets it on dry necessity.
Those of your birth must ever pay such price
For their high station.

King Robert. And their people's good.

Albany. Thus hath it ever been and so must be
With you as princely others in all lands.

Rothsay. Elizabeth was fair !

Albany. And Marjorie
Is noble.

Rothsay. Balanced cunningly ! Ha, ha !

Albany [*aside*]. He's dropp'd to levity and lost his case,
Now I can handle him.—[*Aloud.*] There is no way
But that you yield, and with untroubled mind
Enjoy such freedom as your birth allows.

King Robert. Brother, what do you say ?

Albany [*aside*]. The honey—hush !—
Commending to young lips the medicine.—
[*Aloud.*] Use charily the privilege.

Rothsay. Not I !

Oh, write your contract, for it joins my life
To snaky-headed Sin, in whose hot breast
I'll know what pleasure is. Call forth your priest—
He's but a pander in the guise of Heav'n.
Let Hymen's torches flare—they smell of pitch
And sulph'rus fever of contemn'd desire ;
Ring from your steeples—'tis the curfew bell ;
Prepare your bridal veil—'tis hiding night ;
Present your hateful bride to pulseless arms—
And Lust receives the harlot in its clasp.

King Robert. Mine ears have never yet unclosed their
doors

To words of viler passion. 'Tis the fiend
 Of wrath and opposition in your soul
 That rages in such speech. Your headlong sense
 And reinless fury well deserve more curb
 Than marriage with a noble woman, one
 Whose touch is conquest and whose presence peace.
 Your land requires the sacrifice, if such
 You hold the sacred tie ; and there you stand
 With selfish tumult on abandon'd lips,
 Disgraced by Reason's flight. You cannot know,
 Thus senseless, if you love . . .

Rothsay.

Love ! Speak it not !

It is a glorious word whose ecstasy
 Opens the soul to morning ; a sweet bird
 That sings along the tangled forest ways
 Of Impulse and Enchantment. Name that name,
 I'll lock it in your throat.

King Robert.

Son David, hold !

You have forgotten in your frowardness
 To whom you speak.

Rothsay.

No surely—'tis my sire

Who puts me up to auction ; *that* the face
 My mother chose. Forget ! My brain is clear
 To take such recognition, keep its brand
 Till death unkin me. *That* the hoary frame,
 Whose flesh inherited ties down my life
 To bondage till the worms unloose the web.
 Work out your pleasure ; use me as you will ;
 I do not care ; I'm yours to mar or make.
 Marry my hand, turn all my heart to gold,
 The filthy gold that's damn'd me ! Walter, Ralph,
 Ramorgny, to the tavern !

[*Rushes out.*]

King Robert.

Woe is me !

There is my own blood in that flashing face ;
 I feel it stir the currents of my life.

Albany. You must be firm. My lord of Douglas bends
 A raging brow that dooms unless assuaged.

King Robert. Cousin, forgive my son his thankless mood.
He's restive against bridle ; his free youth
Chafes at the sound of bondage, tho' the reins
Be in a woman's hand.

Douglas. Fear not, my liege.
The priest shall rivet marriage with my house.

Albany. Lord David's rash offence will soon dissolve
Beneath his nature's lightness.

King Robert. Think you so?
When roused, he hath a stubborn petulance
That swells above control.

Albany. A song or dance
Open safe floodgates to his giddy fume.

King Robert. Ay, so it seems ; but in his bitterness
There is a sly tenacity that coils
Within the colour'd vestment of his mirth,
Cold as a snake and ready for the hiss.

Albany. Youth, youth—mere youth ! 'Tis ever harsh and
sweet,
Honey and gall, the zephyr and the blast,
The union of jarring opposites.

King Robert. He never has forgiven me, forsooth,
Because I gave his training and control
To certain grave and pow'rful councillors,
Who cut him off from growing wantonness,
Unseemly conversation and light sports.
He seem'd with whole and gracious heart to bend
To this my wish and swore obedience ;
By healthy counsel braced, conform'd himself
To their direction and good mastership.
But ever and anon a shaft was sped
From scorn-bent lips that pierced my fair content ;
And when his mother died, he rush'd away,
As if a noose were broken, from restraint
Of agèd wisdom, gave himself afresh
To lightness, and no force can bend him now
To gravity of manners.

Albany.

Save a wife

Of noble mould and calm austerity.

King Robert. So have I dreamt. I shall be glad when
peace

Commends this business ; when I lay my hands

In wonted blessing, often gently ask'd,

On David's head. To feel the golden curls

Is richer than a gilded treasury !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*An upper room. Enter Elizabeth Dunbar and
Women with flowers.*

Elizabeth Dunbar. This is a chamber where our pleachèd
blooms

Will never summer-sicken, till they crown

My wedding. Fah ! How damp is the gay store ;

Ere I unseat this rose, shake forth its dew.

1st Woman. 'Twill fall.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Then let it. Ah, 'tis gone, fair cup !

But I will have no weeping.

2nd Woman.

None at all ?

Why, lady, every blossom is in tears.

Elizabeth Dunbar. It shall not be. Go, take them to the
fire,

And lay them in the comfort of its light

Until they laugh.

2nd Woman. 'Twill wither them.

Elizabeth Dunbar.

Take all ;

I'll have no mourners. Would that I were safe.

[*Exeunt Women.*

As future queen ! queen ! Oh, to think of it !

To be the dimple on the cheek of state,

The centre of all smiling and all grace ;

This hand a little silver shrine to bless

All lips that seek it, and about my head

The glory of the sun in all his pow'r.

They call me fair and gracious ; even now

I am the pride of opportunity.
 Then every moment will be on its knees
 A servant to my charms.—I'm public. Ah !
 Visited royally !

[*Enter King Robert and Albany.*]

I wait my maids

To bring me flow'rs to wreathe. My lords, the dawn
 Had made them goblets of bedewing grief
 I set the flames to sip.

Albany [*to King Robert*]. Speak !

King Robert. Nay, not now.

Albany. Lady, the king hath somewhat he would say.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Speak, sire ; attention kneels.

King Robert. Such winsome smiles !

Oh, lady, but I would not have them win
 Sorrows as do the sunbeams, which receive
 The damps and mist of earth.

Elizabeth Dunbar. A riddle, sire !

King Robert. I may not dare to give you what of ill
 I, shamèd, have begotten ; tho' the words
 Wring all the father in my heart.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Your son !

Oh never fear but I will turn him to
 Some sunrise transformation, give him gold
 And purple of new manners.

King Robert. Albany,

Speak ; I beseech you speak.

Elizabeth Dunbar. I am betroth'd ;

You dare not break that vow.

Albany. We've weigh'd the risk,

And needs must run it. Think you we dare lay
 Upon the recent homage of your sire
 The burthen of the shame that drags our house
 Down to the very dust ! It cannot be.

Elizabeth Dunbar. I'll move him—plead with him.

Albany. In any case,

The realm hath not assented. The Estates

In Parliament assembled have not said
The binding word.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Oh, sire !

Albany. It shall not be.

King Robert. I pity you as only those can do
Who say of any grief 'tis not the first.

Albany [to King Robert]. Wilt please you to withdraw ?

King Robert. Yes, yes. [*To Elizabeth.*] One frost
Hurts not the spring. Be comforted ; my son
Were an abiding blight.

Albany. We'll straight descend. [*Exeunt.*]

Elizabeth Dunbar. They cast across my hopes the black-
est shades.

The storm must come. But now there's vacancy
Before all grief and anger. I believe
That I shall never hate, nor weep, nor know
All that has happen'd till I fly this place
Where suddenly my fate hath caught me round.
Escape I must.—I never thought of it—
That I was trembling. . . . Oh, I dare not yet
Think of the downward steps.

[*Enter the Earl of March.*]

Earl of March. My daughter ! God !
Her wraith !—I come to find the king.—Art sick ?
It cannot speak. She's mad.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Fath—er. [*Falls on his neck.*]

Earl of March. My child,
What is 't ? Oh, tell me you are sane, not sick,
Nor supernatural. I feel your tears
Scalding from life's red fires. These raging drops !
Oh, what an ocean swells !—You'd have mine ear ?

Elizabeth Dunbar. Re—ven—ge me !

Earl of March. That I will, and to the death.
On whom ?—Not yet ! I'll wait. Within her throat
The child of anguish labours.

[*Re-enter Women with flowers.*]

Elizabeth Dunbar. Oh ! [*Faints.*]

Earl of March.

She'll die.

1st Woman. Go to the well in haste. [*Exit 2nd Woman.*]

Earl of March.

Her poor lids gape,

Like the wild gates of a surprisèd town.

1st Woman. Lady, you know me? I am Kate.

3rd Woman.

Look up.

Poor lady, are you better?

Earl of March.

Hold your peace.

Elizabeth Dunbar. Send them away, and all the blossoms too.

The storm abhors them. . . . Just one rose to crush,
Red as his life.

[*Re-enter 2nd Woman.*]

2nd Woman. O sir, it cannot be!

It is not true, it never can be true!

They say the prince . . . O Kate! . . . he's turn'd
her off,

And chooses Marj'rie Douglas for his wife.

Earl of March. Begone, you women folk.

[*Exeunt.*]

Elizabeth Dunbar.

On Albany

Revenge me; on King Robert and . . .

Earl of March.

Within

This fleshly scabbard I'm all sword. I'll break
From execrable homage, bear my wealth,
My armies, and my anger to the king
Of England.

[*Enter Duchess Marjorie.*]

Woman, will you dare to flaunt

Your triumph in the eyes of her defeat?

Her father . . .

Duchess Marjorie. O Elizabeth, believe—

This ring, this bond, first link upon the chain

That fetters all my days, should clasp your flesh

If I had will to work it. But you see

My honour's in this circle; this cold spell

Hath bound it in a sleep that Merlin's fay

Could whisper to no freedom. I have sworn

'Fore Heaven to keep the hateful marriage-vow
 Through all the burthen'd years, who have within
 The rigid mind of chill virginity,
 And am less wife than you whom bright desire
 Hath thrill'd with promise. By your eyes I see
 You will repay. Forgive me ! Vengeance fall
 Where it is due—upon the guilty heads
 That hatch'd this treason.

Elizabeth Dunbar. I shall never know
 If you are faithless ; but I hate the sight
 Of your black face—the raven to my heart
 That's dying at your sounds.

Earl of March. God's light ! You lie,
 Cursed brat of Douglas, lie before my face,
 That's lightning-furnished for the vengeful doom.
 How came you married in this shameless haste,
 Without a prick of liking ?

Duchess Marjorie. There is none.
 No spirit haunts with heavenly surprise
 Our wedded veins. My husband at the shrine
 Took with averted head my idle hand.

Earl of March. You would befool us. Hence, nor mock
 our wrath
 With feign'd propitiation. Traitoress,
 You come to buy our peace toward him you wed
 At price of your own womanly reserve.
 We spurn the secrets of your doorless breast.

Duchess Marjorie. Henceforth 'tis shut for ever. Hell's
 black key
 Nor Heaven's golden instrument shall e'er
 Withdraw its bolts. I'll rust in sufferance
 Cold as my heart and icy as my pain.
 If you revenge——

Earl of March. You'll join in our revenge ?

Duchess Marjorie. Never. Declare my rancour !—I'll
 be true,
 True to the faithless boy, who even now

Hath broken plight. I am a wife in name ;
That name I'll keep as white as is the band
On a nun's forehead.

Earl of March. Get you to your pray'rs !

Elizabeth Dunbar. Oh, I am cold !

Duchess Marjorie. I'm sharper than the frost,
And silent too. If ever I forgive,
Spring will be come. [*Exit.*

Elizabeth Dunbar. My crown, my crown !

Earl of March. I'll pour
The scorching embers of my rousèd ire
On the king's head. Thou'lt marry Percy's son,
The gallant Hotspur. We'll to England straight.
Cover your eyes, and lean upon my arm. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Tavern. Enter Wright, Selkirk, and Hostess.*

Wright. Hi, hi ! The mastiff crack'd your little cur.
Fine bloody sport !

Hostess. As I am woman born,
Rascals, you set him on.

Selkirk. Ho ! The last grip
Was none of our contriving. Merry game
To have 'em tug and tear while we could fill
Our cans an' watch 'em bleed. The mongrel ! Ho !
They tore like devils.

Wright. Sweet to hear the yells
O' the small beast. They told me how 't would end,
An' fed my comfort.

Hostess. Oh me ! Bess, my Bess !
You are no men, you lubber patches you !
All who have man about them love fair play.
'Tis only demons crow to see the weak
O'ermatch'd by brutishness. Begone ! My house
Is built for human creatures with a thirst
For harmless wines, and not for cruel blood,
Tho' 'tis a beast's poor drops. Off ! off !

[*Enter Rothsay, Ramorgny, Walter, Ralph, etc.*]

My lord,
They've killed my coddling fav'rite, yellow Bess.
They loosed the mastiff on her.

Wright. Heart ! She raves !

Rothsay. Dastards ! Go kick them to the brinded beast,

And let them taste his jaws. You growl at me,
Sirrahs !

Wright. Ugh !

Selkirk. Heigh !

Rothsay. They're drunk. Lay on your feet,
And send them sprawling to the kennel there.
Poltroons !

Wright [*aside*]. I'll —venge, revenge !

Selkirk [*aside*]. I'll pay you, dog.

[*Exeunt, dragged out by Ralph and Randolph.*]

Rothsay. Varlets !—Be comforted. I'll send thee Blanch.
You know her, Walt—a toy to ease your grief.
Sweetheart, a kiss ! Go, fetch us cheer. [*Exit.*]

My lads,

She's true and pretty, young and fanciful,

Free to be kiss'd, free to be left alone,

Warm as a May noon, merry as a kid.

Heigh-ho ! [*Re-enter Ralph and Randolph.*]

I am not thirsty. How your faces fall !

Pray me to speak of marriage.

Ramorgny. I for one.

Walter. And I.

Ralph. And I.

Randolph. And I. We pray you speak.

Rothsay. I will. 'Tis slavery, and round my heart
Is the vile collar of my servitude.

Marriage ! It is a bond of ice that ties

My passion's stream ; it is the grappling—ay,

Of hostile vessels ! . . .

Walter. Now, friends !

[*Re-enter Hostess.*]

Rothsay. Fill, wench, fill.

Let's pledge the newest beauty. What coy nymph

Hath listened to thy tongue, my soothing John ?

Ramorgny. Faith, there's a merry dozen down the street
As wide awake as nightingales, with eyes
That are a flock of stars.

Rothsay. We'll follow them
 Soon as the Court's asleep. Here's to their light !
 Pah ! Wine hath lost its flavour and its joy.
 I drink it, but 'tis dirt across my lips.
 The more I thirst, the more I loathe the cup,
 Which yet I clasp the more. Sun, exercise,
 Laughter and song, all that was happiness
 And close upon my life hath faded back
 And fallen to illusion.

Ramorgny. Here's a change !
 I've often heard you swear that no such thing
 Was in the world. Illusion ! How you storm'd
 And vow'd it was the filming of the eye
 In stricken age.

Rothsay. And so it is, my friends.
 Only Time strikes much sooner than I thought,
 And falsifies our nature. My true youth
 Is gone, the morning-red, the dew, the notes
 Of soft dawn's youngest confidence—all gone ;
 And that immortal gift of gaiety
 That flies with the approach of deathly years
 Of knowledge and experience and age.

Ramorgny. Ho ! You're a frosty day-spring ! Search
 his poll ;
 Is there a thread from Winter's distaff on 't ?

Ralph. Yellow intact, I'll swear.

Walter. All gilded yarn.

Rothsay. When once regret has breathed upon our days,
 Youth is a bird that flies.

Walter. I'll springe the lark !

[*Enter a Councillor.*]

Who's here? A grey-beard, with the very stamp
 Of Age's silver currency.

Rothsay. A fool,
 A spy on my morality. Good faith,
 I'll give him whiffs of nether smoke to save
 His search from disappointment.

Councillor. Do mine eyes . . .

Rothsay. Or does your nose—?

Walter. Or do your ears—?

Rothsay. Or tongue—?

They are offending senses. Exile them !

If you are present but one moment more,

We'll bleed our casks and drown you in the tide,

Till Age is red as babyhood.—The cur !

[*Tosses wine in his face. Exit Councillor hastily.*]

Ramorgny. Your uncle sets them on.

Rothsay. I know. 'S blood,

Ramorgny, how I hate to see him rule

My country and my father and my king.

He is as false as sin, himself his god,

And I the rebel he must damn to reign.

Ramorgny. Coinrades, withdraw a moment. I have words

Occasion bids me utter, which must rest

Alone within the ears for which they rise

On my reluctant lips.

Rothsay. Withdraw, withdraw ! [*Exeunt.*]

Ramorgny. There is a road, a dark and narrow way
The dagger opens for our enemies.

Rothsay. John, are *you* speaking ? or are these the words
Your evil angel forges on your tongue ?

Ramorgny. My very words, as I shall answer God.

Your uncle seeks your life, and his own blood

Must shield you from the loss ; he seeks your rights ;

His power o'erthrown must pay the penalty ;

Or mark my words, your life and rights will line

His ruthless feet, thus shod for monarchy.

Rothsay. You're false as he.

Ramorgny. Nay, true and politic.

For Friendship is a Janus, double-faced ;

Truth to the right, to the left policy.

Rothsay. I'll have no friend who looks not straight before ;

I'll have no devil in my bosom-faith,

Tempter to unimaginable sin.

Upon a sudden darkness of my brain
 Glares with hell-lighted letters *Murderer* ;
 You'd brand it there for ever ! Fiend, begone !
 I hate my uncle, but within the bounds
 Of honourable nature and just deed.
 Oh, I rejoice to tear the hood of lies
 From off the naked face of his self-love.
 But tear the garment of his flesh away
 With stab of secret malice ! God forbid !
 My own soul too forbid ! I've done with you
 If you're for plotting ; and your orat'ry,
 Matchless in praise of beauty, music, verse,
 Hath in it the wasp's sting, no honey-tongue
 Free-feeder 'mong the sweets. Curse policy !
 My marriage was a plot, a gross deceit.
 'Twould be a merry world if senses ruled,
 And brains were fettered from their craft and lies.
 I'll not betray you, wretch. I scorn the tongue
 By which you thought to pull me to your depth ;
 How dare you dream it !

[*Exit.*]

Ramorgny. To a lower depth,
 As low as drops the coffin shalt thou sink,
 Mine honest fool. That yellow sheaf of hair
 That's ripe upon his brow,—I'll beat it down
 Beneath the flail of Misery ! My tongue,
 That hath procur'd him Pleasure by its guile,
 Shall wheedle Death now to attend on him—
 A mistress fitted to his moral mood ;
 She shall be tedious.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Hall. Enter Albany, Lindsey, and Douglas.*

Albany. Government !
 There's no such thing in this forsaken land.
 To look upon the Earth and think of Heav'n
 Might raise the doubt that God is still enthroned.

Douglas. Yea, in all things of state there is a blind,
Discomforting, wide chaos.

Albany. There's no power,
No issue of a will ;—merely the thoughts
Of unestablish'd brains. Draw nearer, friends.
My brother is a saint, emasculate ;
His son a random boy ; the sentinel
Is lacking in each nature.

Douglas. 'Twas our woe
That you were e'er unseated.

Lindsey. To my mind
It was Perdition's warrant to the State
Which all time since has served.

Albany. Control the breath
Of this our intercourse. An enemy !
I know the hobble.

[*Enter King Robert and Prince James.*]

Brother, are you well ?

King Robert. Sickly inclined to-day.

Lindsey. For that we grieve.

King Robert. Do not. 'Tis scarcely pain ; autumnal
drought
I' the sap of life.

Albany. I'm sorry.

[*Enter Attendant.*]

Attendant. One without
Chafes for the royal presence.

Albany. Bring him in.

Attendant. Another stands with chain'd and savage
mouth.

Albany. Him also. [*Exit Attendant.*]

King Robert. Shall I hence ?

Albany. No. [*Re-enter Attendant with Messengers.*]
Speak you first.

What is your business ?

1st Messenger [*to King Robert*]. Thus doth Henry say,
Your liege-lord, to his vassal :—Since you bar

Your lips to homage, he will come in arms
And force it from your tongue at Edinbro'.

King Robert. I owe your king no enmity.

Albany. His words
Are proud. With open arms at Edinbro'
We shall receive him ; yea, surround his pride
With murderous embrace.

King Robert. Stay, brother, pause !
Beneath these words is war conceived ?

Albany. It is ;
The marriage of two enemies to raise
Seed to themselves of strife.

King Robert. 'Tis rashly done.

Albany. On England's part. [*To 1st Messenger.*] Begone !
Speak you.

2nd Messenger [*to King Robert*]. I'm sent
By March, your liege man, till you tore the cords
Of loyalty in twain ;—from the great earl
Who hangs upon the margin of your land
His storm of wrath, from the insulted peer,
The outraged father, the determined foe,
I bring the declaration that no peace
Will ever tend her olive in his heart,
Till he have wreak'd on you the injury
Fourfold that you have wrought.

[*Cries within of Place for the Duke of Rothsay.*]

Albany. Take breath, poor soul ;
You drive away the very air you need.
All Scotland knows the fickle loyalty
Of him who blows his shame from out your throat,
Our recreant vassal.

[*Enter Rothsay.*]

2nd Messenger [*to Albany*]. Who are you to speak ?

Rothsay. Ay, who ? Address me.

2nd Messenger. From the Earl of March
I bring defiance. . . .

Rothsay. To the Earl of March

Take back defiance, louder in its mouth,
 At heart more fell, in purpose far more deep,
 And servant of an anger that will last
 Till all my hearth of life is crumbling heaps
 That naught will re-illumine. I have no glove
 To cast before him ; this will do as well

[*Flinging a handful of coins to the Messenger.*]

For bargain-drivers and such merchant-souls
 As he whom you call master. Take the gold
 And let it chink my hatred in his ears.
 Yet sooth I should be just. Here's gold for you !

[*Flinging some coins to Douglas.*]

What do you say to it, Lord Douglas ?

King Robert.

Peace !

David, you're mad ! Be still.

Douglas.

I think the prince
 Might keep himself more princely in his speech
 And royal in his manners.

Albany [*aside*].

This offence

Hath given me all Douglas to my use
 Against the speaker.

Rothsay [*to Messenger*]. Sirrah, to your trade !

[*Exit 2nd Messenger.*]

Douglas. Farewell, my liege, and you, my lord [*to Albany*], and you [*to Lindsey*].

Rothsay. Old Insolence !

[*Exit Douglas.*]

Albany.

You've trodden on a mood

May sting you i' the-heel.

Rothsay.

He injur'd me

With highest-brow'd contempt.

King Robert.

You cannot know

All that you do enraging such as he
 With childish taunt and sneer irrelevant.

I tremble for your folly ; yea, my care
 Grows pale and quakes ;—yet vainly do my words
 Knock at the ear of reason ; such a gate
 You've fasten'd from your father.

Albany.

He's a boy

Who wants the method of the schoolmaster.

Rothsay. Now hear me ! I'll not suffer such affronts,—
 The wormwood sour old Age with envious hand
 Mixes in Youth's red cup ;—the privilege
 To deal indignity where honour grows
 With freshest keen ascent and feels each blow
 To the soft pith's new core. Oh, all the shame
 You've struck into my being will be there,
 When it is open'd to its secret depth
 Before the Judgment-seat, and lo ! old men
 Will answer for the sins that they have done
 Across the years to those in backward Time's
 Most lovely season. Spring has blights and winds
 Of killing tooth ; but early manhood's plague
 And desolating frost is cruelty
 And white-hair'd check of pert decrepitude.

King Robert. Son against father !*Albany.*

Let him mock unheard.

We'll turn to weighty matters. We must call
 Our armèd trains together, and on walls,
 In tow'r and fort invincible ensconce
 Our primest courage. Nephew, since you're styled
 The governor of Edinbro', your place
 Will be its flinty hold.

Rothsay.

Oh, war, war, war !

Its thrilling course thro' slow and wretched veins
 Is godlike in its triumph. All is great
 I' the instant ; all is rapturous and new.
 There's twice his wonted fervour in the sun,
 A hundred times more quickly moves the air,
 The world is changed at every trumpet-blast
 That sounds to arms, changed, changed from old to young ;
 From lameness into leaping ; from the doze
 Of chimney-corner to a fiery-eyed
 And sleepless energy ; from palsied fears
 And calculated dangers to firm heart

And unforeseen adventure ; from smooth ease
 To tumbled hardship ; from long days to short ;
 From talk to action ; from cold blood to hot ;
 For all the world is young.—My love-lorn wife,

[*Enter Duchess Marjorie.*]

I'm going to the wars.

Duchess Marjorie. Indeed.

Rothsay. Indeed ?

Ay, to be kill'd, to find a merry grave,
 Where I shall lie with earth-worms.

Duchess Marjorie. You've not said

With whom you fight.

Rothsay. The devil ! I don't care.

I'll turn this common questioner to you
 More patient elders. On my very soul,
 Warfare is trite, familiar in her voice
 As all things in the world. So stale a tongue
 Would make Spring, Autumn ; Joy, Satiety ;
 Creation, Death ; and Heaven damnable.

[*To Prince James.*] Jamie, you like to fight ?

Prince James. Oh yes, I wish

I were a man !

King Robert. Here, James !

Rothsay. I'm leperous !

You shall not draw the child away like that,
 As if I breathed corruption ; make me feel
 My bodily presence a reproach and taint.
 It is a lie, past all endurance false.
 I'll have him with me. Come and see me arm.
 You're not afraid to come ?

Prince James. David !

Rothsay. Hurrah ! [*Exeunt.*]

Albany. Lindsey, support the king. He's wan and ill.

King Robert. I'm weary.

Albany. Then we'll guide you to your rooms.

King Robert. And bring me James. [*Exeunt.*]

Duchess Marjorie. For that old man, I own,

I'm sorry. *[Re-enter Douglas.]*

Douglas. Daughter Marjorie, a word.

Duchess Marjorie. What is it, father?

Douglas. Does that saucy whelp
Use you with honour as his wife? Come, come!
No stubborn face!

Duchess Marjorie. We rarely speak or meet.

Douglas. Comes he at nights?

Duchess Marjorie. We rarely speak or meet.

Douglas. That's repetition. Answer as I ask.

Duchess Marjorie. He drinks the night out.

Douglas. He shall quaff a draught
Of vengeance.

Duchess Marjorie. What the good? 'Twill nothing mend.
I pray you do not move against my lord
Merely for my poor sake. Time ever goes
With steady patience.

Douglas. Albany returns.
Go.

[Re-enter Albany and Lindsey. Exit Duchess Marjorie.]

Albany. Hump! Your son-in-law is insolent.
At heart he is your enemy.

Douglas. The same
Am I to him, the graceless libertine!

Lindsey. I too.

Albany. We'll make this matter for our speech. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III.—*A Room. Enter Ramorgny.*

Ramorgny. Still doth he use me, but with doubtful eyes,
A voice of friendship with its strings untuned,
And hands that shrink from juncture with my flesh.
I never shall regain my ancient place
In his frank bosom. That he uses me
Without the grace of liking is his doom.

[Enter Albany at a distance.]

Albany [aside]. There is a rude fidelity about

His foolish troop ; they'll not report on him.
 But were Ramorgny flattered ! Ah, he droops
 As if his brains lack'd opportunity.—
 You are not for the revel ?

Ramorgny. It lacks zest.

Albany. You are not for such mates. It flatters you
 To serve the prince ; his uncle holds the realm.
 When you are tavern-prison'd or in camp,
 Would it not give a purpose should you note
 Actions of int'rest to the chronicler,
 Shameful to the accomplice ? Bring but word
 How leaks the ship ; I'll put it out to sea.
 I know no other man for this intrigue,
 And counsel you as you would rise in place
 But as historian to attend the prince ;
 And then concert with me how you may take
 His birthplace in my favour ; *he is wreck'd* ;
 My son a slothful bookworm, Robert's child,
 Methinks, in disposition. There is none
 In whom I can detect the faculty
 To sway the eddying people to the flow
 Of his will's current, save yourself, Sir John.

Ramorgny. Your grace, I hate the prince, for injuries
 My tongue would bleed to tell.

Albany. We first must turn
 With complaints and tales the father's idle mind
 Against his son.

Ramorgny. I'm popular, your grace,
 And can be daring. With the prince none else
 Can take my place ; his temper and his loves,
 His pleasure and his study—all are built
 Upon my service.

Albany. Good, divide it, friend !

Ramorgny. I will.

Albany. Your hand in parting. David, now
 I've set your evil genius to work ! *[Exit Ramorgny.]*
 All is in train for ruin. I'll to arms,
 And if he need my help, I will not march. *[Exit.]*

SCENE IV.—*Stirling. A Courtyard. Enter Allan, Prince James, and an old Lunatic (regarded as Richard II. of England, who was starved at Pontefract).*

Old Man. He, he, he ! I'm poor and naked. Naught
Of empery in any of my limbs.
My knees !—Here's carpentry ; I pray you look.
I am a little humble man.

Allan. Alas !

A pretty monarch once !

Prince James. I thought all kings
Had beards of holy silver down the breast,
And bland, sage brows, and comfort at the heart,
Such as my father ever shows us.

Allan. Ah !

Prince James. Why do you sigh ?

Old Man. Not Richard ! I am Dick.
He, he !—the foe of God the King.

Allan. A fool

That envieth at Heaven.

Old Man. God the King
A' sits so safe up i' the sky and reigns—
I crawl, crawl, crawl !

Prince James. Nay, Allan, lift him up.
We will not see a monarch grow a worm.

[*Enter King Robert and Duchess Marjorie.*]

King Robert. O Allan, hath no messenger arrived
Through all the day ? No word from Albany ?
Why doth he hang his tented warfare up
Beyond the reach of David's utmost need ?
Why doth he linger when round Edinbro'
The English fasten with a brazen clasp ?
'Tis strangely done, unnaturally done,
To leave the lad to perish !

Old Man. He ! you're great !
Dost think of change ?

King Robert. Oh, do not put my tongue

On such a question's rack !

Old Man. Go, make a grave !

'Twill change as you change, low when you are low,
But make it great and high the while you live.

King Robert. Old bitter king, I'll build no haughty tomb
Who am a wretched worm and vilest sinner.

I'd lay me for sepulture among clods,
So might I purchase rest unto my soul.

Prince James. Father !

King Robert. Quick, Allan, run ! I hear a horn.
[*Exit Allan.*]

Duchess Marjorie. You heard aright. They come.

[*Re-enter Allan with Ramorgny and Walter.*]

Walter. 'Tis victory !

King Robert. He's safe ?

Walter. Oh, bless you, sire, as glad as day,
Pouring out wine to match the deathly flow
Of the great toper War.

Ramorgny. The ruffian foe
Wrench'd at our city's girdle, but within,
Our hearts were high and though in desperate case
Supreme o'er insult. Through ungarnish'd streets
Grey Famine dragg'd her bones, yet every man
Did feed on steaming courage.

King Robert. And the prince . . . ?

Ramorgny. Was brave and headstrong. Softly be it said
He sent a challenge to the English king
To pick him out a hundred Englishmen
To meet our countrymen to that same tune,
And on the issue of the combat stake
The freedom of our nation.

King Robert. God above !
Has he no reason, is he lunatic,
A simpleton, a blusterer, a child,
To play such hare-brain'd antics on a foe ?
Anxieties perplex and choke my thought ;
Fear in the cage of my close heart doth pant

And flutter its weak plumage. These mad pranks
Will dig my grave.

Ramorgny. 'Tis but a pleasant tale
Among the soldiers.

Walter. By my troth, Sir John,
Why did you take it from the common mouth
To misbecome your lips. The merry faults
Of friends are ever sacred to their band,
Or woe is me for all good fellowship !

Ramorgny. Nay, Walt, no treason ; 'twas the marvel of it
That rush'd from off my lips.

King Robert. Does Albany
Know of this shameful frolic ?

Walter. No, sire, no.
He hath not stirr'd his arms from Caldermoor.

King Robert. What will he say ? How shall I bear his
eye

Who have begot this son ?—A crowding noise !

Allan. Of shouts and songs and triumph. 'Tis the prince.

[*Enter Rothsay with marshal array.*]

Old Man. Eyes—eyes of jailers. I must hide from eyes ;
They make me king again, and treat me ill,
And capture me. I'll creep behind this cloak,
This furry cloak—warm prison !

[*Hides under the King's long mantle.*]

King Robert. Fated boy !
I'm glad he's safe at home !

Rothsay. Well, Father, James !
Ramorgny, jolly Walter ! Duchess, there,
You've not a forward welcome.

Duchess Marjorie. To a back.
And so you conquer'd ?

Rothsay. Laurels ! That I did ;
And March is beaten back. I never knew
What life I carried till the flinty days
Of peril struck it out—a joyous blaze
That lit my blood to gold. What ho ! A check !

Something amiss—a frost about your air
That's just blown in upon me with a hurt
That rankles in my joy. You stand like men
O' snow. What is it, father?

King Robert. Your rash deed.

Rothsay. What deed?

King Robert. Your wicked message to the King
Of England, whereby, as I understand,
You staked upon the issue of a joust
The freedom of your country.

Allan [aside]. Sire, not now.

King Robert. I am surprised and pained that you should
stoop

To such a jester's action. Do not flush
And start away; I speak it out of love.

Rothsay. We'll go elsewhere for welcome. Not enough
The empty doorways and the cheerless board,
The dull and tardy greeting—with your words
You set a canker to the triumph, joy,
That rioted in blossom at my heart.
You've made for me no welcome—dearest word,
The home that language raises by the voice,
That the eyes light, whose doors are open hands;
None of you built me that—not one of you.
Only I pass the bare unfeeling walls
Behind which I was born.

King Robert. Your talk shoots off
From my direction, which was gentle blame
Of a grave wrong.—Tears!

Rothsay. Come, friends, 'tis forgot
We saved our country by determined arms
And empty mouths. I think within the streets
We'll find a younger memory. Come on!

[*Exit with Followers.*]

King Robert. O God, the thought of him is ever near,
The person ever bitterly apart;
Yet 'neath Thy will did I beget his form,

Which is the barrier to all my love.

'Tis well his mother lives not.

Allan.

Ah, 'twere well

She were not dead.

King Robert.

What, sirrah, do you mean?—

[*Aside*] They would not let me rule the land as John,

My name, because 'twas ominous and sad.

They call'd me happy Robert. Ah, the name

Is nothing ; fate is deeper-set than words.

Old Man. Starved !

King Robert.

What a cry ! Art cold ?

Old Man.

Some folks alive

Would keep a body breadless, and that's cold ;

For breadless, cold, and dead are all one thing.

They tried to starve me in a prison once.

You'll never starve a-body ?

King Robert.

Dreary sport,

This play on *starved* !—No, never. Come within.

The rain drips sulkily. Another horn

Blows out a new arrival—Albany.

I'll go to meet him, and unload my grief

Of its unsharèd burthen, which is great.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room. Enter Albany, Douglas, Lindsey, and Ramorgny.*

Albany. The measure must be sudden and severe,
A storm that breaks not lowers—else the mild
And easy breath of our good king will blow
The righteous cloud of pending chastisement
Far from its destined quarter.

Douglas. God forbid !
Vengeance no more can wait within my soul.
The prince is ready, ripe to be cut down,
Full-dyed in sin ; his shamelessness outspread
In riot and a license beyond speech.
He spends his days and nights in dalliance
And sensual delights. He stops at naught.
Before mine eyes and in my daughter's sight
He dares salute his lemans. Insolence
Profanes his royalty, and his graced rank
Stoops to the reveller's corrupt degree.

Lindsey. Since our last war he rages in excess,
Flaunts in gay silks, is rash and mettlesome,
Hungry as hawk, and lavish.

Albany. But I've turned
The key of the exchequer with a will
Not easy to unlatch. He shall not seize
The wealth I've purpose for to buy him drink,
Fine clothes, and base enjoyments. I have griped
His father's childish mind as in a vice,

And hold it firm 'gainst prodigality
And spendthrift rage.

Ramorgny. Your grace, he's desperate ;
Swears that you starve his pleasure, which must feed
On golden pieces as its honied store,
Or perish.

Albany. Let it perish ! 'tis a drone,
A slavish grasper of the yellow hoard
It never gathered.

Ramorgny. He's infuriate,
And in his passion cuts from every belt
The purse well-filled or empty ; from the poor
He takes his mite, from the rich citizen
His cumbrous weight of merry-sounding coin.
Will they or nil they, each must render up
Their gilt provision for his potent need.
This does he every night.

Lindsey. Audacious deed !
Good Albany, we pray as Justice spoke
That sudden end be put to such offence.

Albany. Do not entreat ; the need I recognise,
And only wait for opportunity
To fling apart her doors in circling time
For entrance of my deed.—Fellow, your hest ?

[*Enter Attendant.*]

Attendant. The Bishop of St. Andrews died last night
At cock-crow.

Douglas That's i' the dawn.

Albany. A fat divine,
With lands to match the breadth of his good paunch,
And gold his body's weight. How died the whale ?

Attendant. 'Twas apoplexy.

Albany. Perished by the neck,
As Death were but a hangman ! Bear your news
To the king's pious ear. [*Exit Attendant.*]

My brain is quick ;
Suggestion leaps within it, as a child

Unborn, but stirred. The bishop, as I said,
 Was rich beyond belief, and where he goes
 Can nothing follow ; therefore is his wealth
 Where he hath left it—in St. Andrews town,
 Which town, I pray you note, is reached by way
 Of wild Strathtyrum—mile or so to left
 Of Falkland Castle, which is mine—a hold
 Safe as the brow of councillor to hide
 The secrets that it spans.

Douglas. How points this speech ?

Albany. Ramorgny, is the duke at feast ?

Ramorgny.

He is.

The tavern roared as I went by.

Albany.

You're due

Among the boon companions ?

Ramorgny.

Ay, your grace.

Albany. Then go and spread report of this man's death,
 Drop hints of wealth, of satisfaction bright
 To bold adventure : say the enterprise
 Is perilous and promises much gold.
 Do this, Ramorgny, with familiar voice
 And stimulating laugh. Go speedily. [*Exit Ramorgny.*
 Friends, will you hence ? Design with chaos strives
 In this mine orb ; I pray you solitude.

Douglas. And may it be of moment to the land.

Lindsey. Amen, as I'm a patriot. [*Exeunt.*

Albany.

'Twill work !

I'll prison him before the week is out,
 And then ! . . . That cobweb, how it draws
 My inattentive eye ; I cannot turn
 My glance from its magnetic central point
 Of all imagination.—It is said
 That mighty Bruce, my famed progenitor,
 Learnt lessons from a spider—patience
 Through oft-retarded enterprise.—Yon fly
 With the tight wings !—'Tis held and then . . . destroyed.
 [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Tavern. Enter Rothsay, Walter, Randolph, Ralph with a bound felon.—Apart Wright and Selkirk.*

Rothsay. Here, Ralph, your knife and cut these cords from him.

Another slash—they're gone !—Oh, give it me,—
You hesitate—half-hearted !

Ralph. Well ! 'tis this :

He is a parricide.

Rothsay. The very sin

For which I loose him.

Ralph. You have gone too far ;

There's terror in this prank.

Rothsay. What, see him killed

Before my eyes for self-defence from blows

Of an old tyrant, whose first tyranny

Was in begetting him—initial wrong

To be atoned for—how ? By lording it

Over the wretched body and crushed soul ?

Then is paternity a monstrous crime

Blind justice cannot see.

Randolph. Hear him !

Rothsay. I speak

My very heart. This fellow shall not die

For guarding life, when he who filled the flask

Would empty it. Oh, shame ! You're free !

Ralph. He's dumb ;

Death's muzzled him. Untie his mouth with drink.

Randolph. Ay, fetch a can !

Walter. A can, a can !

Rothsay. Hey there !

[*Hostess brings wine.*]

Walter. Down with it ! Ha ! it tastes like very life.

It is the blood of amity ; we're friends

Who share in this red tie.

Felon. Too much, too much !

Walter. Of comradeship and wine ?

Randolph.

The ass !

Rothsay.

You fools !

He's dazed. Just think ! he's touched the hem of Death,
The inner shroud that wraps all sense and breath.
How felt you, knave, so near the dismal end ?

Walter. Oh, search his feelings now he's near to life
And clinking glasses.

Rothsay.

Yet it fascinates

The skeleton, while flesh is full and young ;
Its beggary when purple state is kept
In every vein ; its dolesomeness when joy
Flouts summer's passing clouds ; its cynic stare
And disenchanted mouth's rigidity,
When eyes desire and lips have troth and kiss ;
Its ancient chalky tinct, when red is up
And dawn a-crowing in the face and limbs ;
Its dry and famished orifice when feasts
Bubble with wine ; its impotence when strength
Heaves as a sea the sinews. Oh, it shows,
Far dusty goal, how long will be our course.

Randolph. We'll talk of sepulchres and tipples, lads !
Corruption and long draughts !

Walter.

Hey now, boys, drink !

Rothsay [to Hostess]. Pour here, pour all ! Courage !

We'll talk of death

And dying. This professor we'll elect
To the top chair. Here, gown him in my cloak ;
The ermine is scholastic. Ha, la, la !

Wright [aside to Selkirk]. A felon.

Selkirk [aside to Wright]. H'm ! Best wine for him,
and kicks

For us !—

Wright [aside to Selkirk]. Mum, mum ! They'll give you
to the dogs.

Selkirk [aside to Wright]. No drink for us.

Wright [aside to Selkirk]. They'll duck you.

Selkirk [aside to Wright]. Damn the crew

Felon. My soul !—

Walter. No, man, your body—that's the theme
To which we're merry pupils.

Randolph. Here's to it !

Ralph. Here's to your carcase !

Rothsay. Tell us how you felt
When Death was on a moment's other side.

Felon. Oh, nothing much !—but rather tight . . .

Rothsay. As if
The body hugged its kernel—ghastly clip !
Here's the first instance that our master gives
From the last art of all.

Walter. Cheerly, my lads !
A health to each.

Rothsay. Right heartily.—How else
Felt you, good master ?

Felon. Eh, sire ?

Rothsay. You are safe.
How felt you dying ?

Felon. Why I cannot say—
But like as you must pass a ghost.

Rothsay. He's raised
A most delicious shiver. On my soul,
There's magic in 't,—impossibility
In death !—a lure that never will draw us,
A wonder that will never be, a dream
Cast o'er our being from the world without,
And in us but a fragment dim, distraught,
Of what we do not know and cannot learn.
A place of marvel too forlorn for us,
Where old men seek their losses, an event
Which we with our new breath can never cause ;
A something, which is nothing to the dawn,
The bud, young man or maiden . . .

[*Enter Ramorgny.*]

Ramorgny. What of them ?

Walter. Can't die, can't die !

Ramorgny. The wine hath made a way
To Reason's spring. *[Clamour without.*

Rothsay. The townsfolk at our gates !
Up, up ! They'd seize our prisoner ! His eye
Is like a hound-caught hare's. A fight, a fight !

[Enter Citizens.]

1st Citizen. We'll have the monster !

2nd Citizen. Tear the parricide !

Rothsay. Strike at the numskulls that hold fathers dear !

1st Citizen. The prince, the prince !

3rd Citizen. Cry shame on him !

1st Citizen. Young lord,

Fie on this prank !

3rd Citizen. Justice !

Rothsay. Protect the weak !

[They fight. Exeunt Citizens, dragging off the offender.]

Traitors, you'll suffer ! Rebels, on my word

I'll deal it to you heavily for this !—

He's precept and example too, poor wretch !

My blood is up.

Ramorgny. Then have I news for you.

The Bishop of St. Andrews died last night.

Rothsay. Mercy ! You'd have us get to church and pray
Our hot blood out for him !

Ramorgny. Rash gaiety !

Ho, ho ! I'd have you seize his earthly goods,

And leave immortal baggage to himself.

Walter. Ay, that's our cue !

Rothsay. How, how ?

Ramorgny. Why thus. At dawn

Ride to St. Andrews, claim the bishopric,

And hold it while it serves you as a purse.

Rothsay. Your speech is a divining-rod ; my thought

Digs to the bright event. I'll start at dawn,

And ride alone. Gold, gold, my cronies, gold !

Walter. Let's go in company.

Rothsay. I'll ride alone,

For this great robbery shall be my own.

Walter. Look yonder through the door!

Rothsay. What is 't to see?

Walter. A flare of light.

Randolph. Look, look!

Walter. It trails along

Its hairy length of sanguine shining rays,
And seeks Aquilo with terrific sweep
Of baleful triumph.

Ralph. Wonderful to see!

Rothsay. Mathematicians say, as I've heard told,
When comes this comet 'tis a sign of death
Or downfall to some prince; or to some land
The symbol of destruction.

Walter. So 'tis said.

Rothsay. Ho, la!—it hurries fiercely to its work,
The rufous minister of starry fate!
'Tis ardent in the service of despair
And death—a flaming presence with the torch
That Até, as our chronicles relate,
Waved over Troy in bloodthirsty despite.
How must the doomèd wretch be sunk in woe
Who feels that skiey sword within his breast,
And all his power beneath the withering breath
Of yon proud exhalation with hot train
Of fiery vapour! 'Tis a gallant slave
To spindle-turning destinies; they are
Witches to own familiar such as that
Bright demon of the clouds. We'll pledge it, boys,
Hold up red wine to its more red success;
No matter who goes up nor who goes down.
Here's to 't!

Ramorgny [*aside*]. The sybil knows another's fate—
Is silent of her own, howe'er she prate.

[*They go on carousing.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room. A portrait of the King over the fireplace. Enter King Robert, Albany, Douglas, and Lindsey.*

King Robert. I cannot. Oh, you push my fatherhood
From its old chair beside my heart's red fire
It's sat by many a year. Imprison him !
Close him from light to which I called him forth,
And send him back to unpaternal Night's
Most lone possession ! Tell me what the sin
Can merit such discharge ?

Albany. Be calm. Our words
Have carried tempest, and their urgency
Hath told like cruel blast. Good brother, calm !
I'll speak again and not belie our scope.

King Robert. Do, I beseech you.

Albany. Listen with your mind,
Nor let your heart once hear.

King Robert. 'Tis deaf, 'tis deaf.

Albany. The evil that is held and never spilt,
Though deadly in its essence, doth no harm ;
Being disseminate with its advance,
It spreads its venom. So my nephew's sins,
When privily enacted, hurt but him
In his dishonoured self. Now are they poured
Upon the woeful land ; for every night
He robs the various, darkling travellers.
His license grows ; his amorous intrigues
And shriftless dissipation fill all mouths
With scandal and amaze.

King Robert. And he's my son !
He might have been unlawfully begot,
He's put me to such shame.—Forgive the wrath,
My buried queen ! who gav'st him that bright hair,
With all a cornfield's promise in its hue
When looked on by a beggar.

Albany. Patience ! Hear !
He's but a boy, and childish in offence ;

So would we have him punish'd with the dark,
Straight, frightening walls and sudden privacy.

And this but for a space, that in his pride
The simple lesson may be fixed as deep
As is his alphabet in memory.

King Robert. But prison !—Oh, I feel his sun might set
If plunged in darkness, and I cannot think
That he'd come out like morning ; he would hate,
As Rhadamanthus, that grim judge of Hell,
The father who condemned him to the gloom.
I'll never do it.

Albany. Yet in days of old,
You shut him, a scared child with wailing mouth
And passionate limbs, in pitchy, cramped space
Of a lock'd closet. Punishment should grow
As grows the stature and the mind of those
It chastens. Storms to break the forest's will
Must sweep not as they dealt with seedlings ; so
The narrow chamber that confined the child
Must be a dungeon when he grows to man.
The chastisements are similar, degree
Being proportioned to the years they curb.

King Robert. True, true ! But doth a father's power
enlarge
With life's expansion in the youth he's reared,
That he dare punish after that same form
That served him for the boy ?

Albany. Thus Heaven does.
The chastening of conscience pricks the sense
Of infancy but as uneasy thorn ;
Manhood it fixes with the spear-like thrust ;
In kind, the same—in measure, different.

Douglas. We pray you listen, for we trust you grant
The prince deserves some check.

King Robert. Oh, sirs, I do.

[*Enter Ramorgny.*]

Albany. How now ?

Ramorgny. I've but a moment's very chink
In which to speak. I must be back e'en now,
Or smart among my comrades. List ! the prince
Is bent on holding in rash, lawless grasp
St. Andrews' bishopric. He starts at dawn.

King Robert. An impious thought.

Ramorgny. But there is worse behind ;
He's loosed from death, and eaten at the board
With one who slew his father.

King Robert. He forgets
The chain that life hath locked with heavy key
About the child and parent, unto which
They must be slaves, or bear the lash of God
Until they perish ! He forgets all this !

Ramorgny. I must away.

Albany [*aside to Ramorgny*]. And bring me privily
The men you praised last night. [*Exit Ramorgny.*]

[*To King Robert.*] Now you will grant
Necessity was prophet thro' our lips.

So, so !—Good brother, you're persuaded now ?

King Robert. As to the state. But, Albany, the lack
Of duty and respect to fatherhood !

O Albany, there is no darkness—*none*,
I'd put him in for that. Another judge
Must sentence it. I'm partial, Albany.

Albany. But for the state ?

King Robert. Bid Allan fetch my son.
Leave me.—Yes, yes ! I know it is in vain ;
But let me try to touch one chord in him
My nature strung. I'll see you presently.

[*Exeunt Albany, Douglas, and Lindsey.*]
The attributes of God, when bound on man,
Are cruel to the flesh ; His charity
Doth not oppress, He never craved an alms ;
But a king's mercy weighs on him as guilt—
And punishment ! Oh, there is very lead !
To judge, to punish !—And the judge is frail

And stain'd ; the punishment is hurt and shame
 To one who shares with him a heart that aches,
 The changeful cheek, and the tomb's last disgrace.
 O execrable burden ! God, O God !
 Why did'st thou bow Thy creature of an hour
 To carry what omniscience alone
 Should strike with and eternity confirm ?
 I'm crushed ; the iron power is on my soul,
 And on the body that begot my son,
 Whom I must punish.—Nay, I'll win and save.
 Oh, I will speak with searching mildness, reach,
 Like the soft rain, where there is seed in him
 The rough blast could not touch. If I am calm
 Perchance . . . But hark ! a door was thrown ajar.
 'Twere well to sit.—That comes from his young throat.

Rothsay [*within, singing*].

The devil is a sinner,
 Ha, la, la,—la !
 But none can hit him fair ;
 For who would be the winner ?
 Fa, la, la,—la !
 Ay, who would be the winner,
 When the devil does not care ?

[*Enters.*]

Good even, father [*lifting his cap*].

King Robert.

David ! Ah, 'tis well

You make some show of reverence.

Rothsay.

I'm framed

To courtesy as morning to the light.

I could not with a covered head insult

The meanest roof.

King Robert.

You show me courtesy

By instinct, and yet wrong its very source !

You've sinned against that name with which your birth

Did christen me, by taking the vile part

Of one who broke his origin and mould

That fashioned forth his life.

Rothsay.

Ridiculous !

Because one parent has abused his state,
Would we dethrone all others? By your leave,
You can't have a good conscience, father.

King Robert.

That

I have toward you. I ever loved you dear
As sunshine or as life ; have ever striven
To do my part toward you ; it came like joy.
David, that look across your lips ! [*Aside.*] Oh, that
Curdles my love as some malicious sprite
The moon-pale milk !—I've ever been to you
A father just and merciful.

Rothsay.

Most just.

O bitterest sarcasm my life can frame !
Just—and you sold me to a loathsome thing
You call my wife ! . . . and merciful ! You cut
My happy youth away as the green shoot
That carried summer in illumined growth
Ere tyrant March dissevered. Just, you say ?—
Who made me man and snatch from me the rights
That consecrate my sex. What ! merciful ?
And you have driven me beyond the door
And threshold of your favour ! Is it just
To breed me to my station and deny
The means to keep it ? Merciful to trust
Backbiters' malice, comments of dislike,
And your own icy age ? Just ! Merciful !

King Robert. The woman you have married was the
choice

Of Albany, your uncle ; and he said
'Twas for the best, and he is mostly wise.

Rothsay. Why did you trust such matter to his will
If you so loved me ? Your deed's eloquent
Of love that's mighty little !

King Robert.

Oh, unkind !

'Twas for your good, and that it failed is due
More to your humour and unchecked caprice

Than to the harmless matron.

Rothsay.

Thank you !

King Robert.

Son,

I'll bear no insolence—as if you'd been

Aught but a thankless prodigal.

Rothsay [*drawing his dagger*]. We're quits.

King Robert. David, put down that dagger. Do you hear?
Obey me, put that dagger down.

Rothsay.

Ha, ha !

King Robert. Now, David, I will be obey'd in this,
As in the prohibition which I make
To what you purpose—seizing on the wealth
O' the Bishop of St. Andrews. At your peril
You dare to touch it.

Rothsay.

I'll not touch, but hold.

King Robert. 'Tis at your peril.

Rothsay.

Threats are dangerous—

To children.

King Robert. And to disobedience
Is due a childish punishment. You look
Merely a stubborn boy deserves the whip.
Do as I tell you.

Rothsay [*stabbing his father's portrait*]. Now I've got a
sheath.

Obey you ! Never, never, never, never ! [*Exit.*]

King Robert. He's torn the painted breast that cannot
bleed,

While this is heaving to let out its tides

By any ragged cleft. O David, David !

[*Re-enter Albany, Douglas, and Lindsey.*]

Albany. Hand me the water, Douglas.

King Robert.

There, there !—there !

It must be done.

Albany.

Lindsey, the warrant, quick !

And pen and ink. [*Exit Lindsey.*] He passed us with an
oath

Fouling his mouth.

King Robert. Look there !

Douglas. A wanton deed,
Outrageous and contemned.

[*Re-enter Lindsey with the warrant.*]

Albany. Your signature,
And all is done. Here is a pen that's wet.

King Robert. Where must I write ?

Albany. Just there.

King Robert. The ink is black,
As if it mourned for him ; and here's the seal
That shuts him from the sun and closes him
In primal night. I'm thinking, Albany,
The mother from whose lightless womb he came
Will ne'er forgive this writing.

Albany [*to Douglas*]. Take it hence.

[*Exit Douglas.*]

King Robert. In Falkland Castle ?

Albany. If he rides that way.

King Robert. Yes, toward St. Andrews.

Albany. Falkland Castle, then.

[*Re-enter Douglas.*]

King Robert. I'll go to bed.—Well, gentlemen, you see
I'm not a dotard, though I love the boy.—
Bid candles to my chamber—it is dark.—
Oh, oh !—One other question, Albany :
What is the dungeon like ?

Albany. Most merciful ;
No rocky pit and hold of tainted air
Or unclean life—merely a narrow room
Whose grated window from a passage black
Draws in the constant wind.

King Robert. Well, well !—Once more
He'll sleep in his own bed, within the room
Where as a sunny lad I've seen his face
Smile, though 'twas night. I'll leave you, gentlemen.

[*Exit with Douglas.*]

Albany. All's working to our end. Go, Lindsey, fetch

Hither Ramorgny and his comrades. Needs
I speak with them in private, and meanwhile
Have horses ready ; boot and spur yourself
For momentarily departure.

Lindsey. With best speed.

[*Exit.*

Albany. All is not done : as if a prison killed
The nature it has fastened ! He'll come forth
In all the passion of galled liberty,
And lord it o'er me with tumultuous spite
And mischievous demeanour. I must hear
His voice no more—never ! Yet gossips say
Blood cries aloud against the murderer.
Such call were ruinous. I'll spill no blood ;
He shall not have a crimson advocate
To make the airy vault resound his part,
And rouse the common earth to plead for him.
No blood, no blood ! But he shall simply die—
Die as old men do from the life worn out ;
Die, not by violence, but slow degrees ;

[*Enter Ramorgny, with Wright and Selkirk.*

Not broken like a glass with all its wine,
But emptied, whole and flawless. Selkirk, Wright !

[*They approach.*

This good observer says you hate the prince
For insults and neglect. I ask you, friends,
To hate him for this gold ; ay, more than this—
By handfuls as you pile your hatred up.
I see you have no tongues that you can use
Before a gentleman. I therefore ask
But simple “Yes” or “No”—two little words—
The longer, wealth ; the shorter, poverty,
With my displeasure coupled. Say your say.

Wright. Yes, I'll do anything.

Selkirk.

Yes, so will I.

Albany [*giving gold*]. An earnest for you each. And
which of you

Knows Falkland Castle ? I am lord of it.

Wright. I've known it from my cradle. Over there
Against Strathtyrum.

Albany. Ay, and there you go
This very night, for ere another falls
And closes in the world, the prince will lie
In more enduring darkness.

Wright. Prison?

Albany. Ay,
And tomb to be, for you will make it so
By holding from the belly and the throat
That which keeps life.

Wright. Clem him?

Albany. Your word is right.
Take them away, Ramorgny ; give them all
The circumstances of time and place and how.
Bid Lindsey to me, and return anon,
For you must start at midnight.

[*Exeunt Ramorgny, Wright, and Selkirk.*

When all's done,

Ended and over, I will give it out
He died of wasting fever, such as oft
Is shut a phantom with the prisoner
To house together.

[*Re-enter Lindsey.*]

Lindsey. Here and at your will.

Albany. To horse at once, the warrant in your pouch.
I heard him call his servant ; he's a-bed,
And we must get the start.

Lindsey. Long ere he comes,
We'll own a briery ambush.

[*Re-enter Ramorgny.*]

Albany. Here's Sir John.
Come to my private chamber, and tread soft.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Courtyard. Dawn. Randolph in a drunken sleep. Allan and Walter.*

Walter. The lie-a-bed !

Allan. I halted by his room.

Lord, he was snoring ! and when thus he sleeps,
He cries out when he's waked.

Walter. I'll watch no more.

This time o' day puts sickness into me.
The air is strange and empty, as just left
By mouldy ghosts and all the crew o' sprites.

Allan. A purple, sodden dawn.

Walter. That's overdrunk
Of water.

Allan. Is he coming ?

Walter. Heigh-ho ! heigh !

Allan. A step ! You hear 'em far off at this hour.
Hist !

Walter. He's a very sluggard.

[*Enter Rothsay.*]

Rothsay. Where's my horse ?

Allan. Beyond the archway yonder. But, my lord,
I could not find your bridle.

Rothsay. Here it is.

I took it to give Jamie, for he rides
This morning his first charger : give it him ;
He likes its fashion, and he loves me. There !
Ha, ha, ha, ha ! I'm making no bequest.
Cheer up, old Allan.

Allan. This is food for you,
Some scraps of dainty meat such as you love.

Rothsay. The early cold will make me hungry. Thanks.
How solemn Walter looks !

Walter. 'Tis a queer hour,
That makes you sink within and flap your lids.
Heigh-ho ! heigh-ho !

Allan. 'Tis five o'clock.

Rothsay. St. Andrew ! I am late.—
Give me the food.—See, 'tis a heavy sky.—
Farewell, farewell ! I'll make your pockets bright.
Bid Randolph watch for me to-morrow night.

Walter. God speed !

Allan. God keep you !

Rothsay. To you from my heart ! [*waving*].
Father, I'm going ! [*Exit.*]

Allan. Walt, I cannot think
Why he's so under cloud ; a little wild,
But that's youth's wont, and most affectionate.—
He's turning now. A thousand shames say I.

Walter. Oh, 'tis his uncle's doing, and the stiff,
Grave set o' the king's virtue. Let us feed,
To make sure we're not standing in a dream. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*Strathtyrum. Enter Lindsey, Ramorgny, Wright, and Selkirk.*

Lindsey. Crouch ! and I'll be your watchman.

Ramorgny. What sound's that ?

Lindsey. Some bird.

Wright. The plover.

Lindsey. Oh !

Ramorgny. Lie close.—Down here
The shade grows dull. Is 't clouding more ?

Lindsey. Ay, fast.

Ramorgny. A horse's neigh !

Lindsey. Some peasant over there
Lading his heavy beast.

Wright. 'Tis peat for fires.

Lindsey. You call it so ?—A shower !

Wright. Bo ! a flood.
There's water in all parts about your head.
'Twill fall for many a day.

Lindsey. Truly.

'Wright. A bet !

Ramorgny. There's something like the dumb show of a blast.

Lindsey. It comes before a tempest.

Ramorgny. I am chill.

Lindsey. 'Tis he—at least a man who loops his reins
Over a thorn, and throws his gaze about
As looking for the way. Now, now ! He turns
Direct to us. All ready !

[*Enter Rothsay, ascending a slope.*]

Rothsay. Oh the joy
Of being quite alone with land and air,
Freedom, and Youth, and Day,—'tis otherwise
With Night, but I shall reach the town ere dark.
I've not enjoyed a solitary ride
Till now, when I've the throbbing fellowship
Of Resolution, with unhindered space
Before me——

Lindsey. You're deceived. In the king's name
I apprehend your person. [*They surround him.*]

Rothsay. Do you know
I am the Prince of Scotland ? How is this ?
Sir William Lindsey, and Ramorgny too !
You're come to fetch me back ? I'm one to four !

Lindsey. Grip ; hold him firm ! Secure his sword, Sir
John.

Rothsay. Ha ! You're a pack of dastards.

Lindsey. Got it ?

Ramorgny. Yes.

Lindsey. Fellows, a rope.

Rothsay. I will not suffer it.
You make yourselves my enemies.

Lindsey. And such,
Young man, we are. Draw back his wrists.

Rothsay. God's sake !
You will not bring me home in such a guise,
Before the gaping street ?

Lindsey. No, certainly.

Rothsay. What will you do with me?

Lindsey. Convey you straight

To Falkland Castle.

Rothsay. Where?

Lindsey. Your uncle's hold

Hard by.

Rothsay. Oh, take me home! Do anything

But take me there. I do not mind the street.

Oh, take me back! I'm ready.

Lindsey. We must keep

Our orders.

Rothsay. Let me see the warrant.

Lindsey. Here.

Your father's name and writing.

Rothsay. Put it up.

I hate him!—John, they cannot mean me harm

If you are here.

Lindsey. Ramorgny, go and fetch

Yon peasant's hack. We must proceed.

Rothsay. My horse

Is yonder.

Lindsey. We shall want it. You must stride

The work-horse that he'll bring.

Rothsay. What does this mean?

Lindsey. How heavily it rains! The streams will flood;

'Twere best to move at once. Come, David Stuart,

These men will be your warders.

Rothsay. Do not go—

Not leave me all alone with them. Good sir,

I never injured you. Be merciful,

And take me with you,—take me home. I'll ne'er

Offend again. Indeed I will not.

Lindsey. On!

Ramorgny brings the beast.

Rothsay. This fellow caught

My cloak. I'm drenched.

Lindsey. They'll tie yon peasant's rag

About your shoulders.

Rothsay [*to Ramorgny*]. Will you suffer it?

Oh, you are changed to owner of this brute,

Vile traitor!

Ramorgny. 'Tis a jest; they mean no harm.

Rothsay. . . . Ramorgny, loose my sword;

You swashing blackguard, 'tis not for your use.

[*Ramorgny slinks off.*]

Lindsey, you still look like a gentleman. . . .

Lindsey. As such condemn the thief: see to him, keep
To the letter your instructions.

Wright.

H'm.

[*Exit Lindsey.*]

Selkirk.

Greenhorn!

An' so you do not love our company?

[*To Wright.*] Drag him along. Sir John has skulked
away,—

Speckles the distance;—now you're left to us,

Two merry knaves.

Rothsay. I am forsaken—lost!

What shall I do?—Good fellows . . .

Wright.

Gulp your lies,

And dine off 'em.

Rothsay. My men, how far is it?

Wright. Five miles, sweet boy.

Rothsay. You look good fellows . . .

Selkirk. Ay,

So says a throat that's almost stiff with fright.

Rothsay. No, no!

Selkirk. The liar! Hold your tongue, and come.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Courtyard. Enter King Robert, Albany, Douglas, and Soldiers.*

King Robert. No peace ! Still fret the Borders.

Albany. March is up,
The English sway'd to northward. 'Tis for us
This time to give them battle on their ground,
Nor let them ravage Scotland.

Douglas. Trust my arms.
Your grace, I'll drive them to their scarpèd peak,
And plunder every homestead. In an hour
We start.

Albany. You're swift, Lord Douglas. Heaven grant
As sure as swift !

Douglas. You doubt it ?

Albany. Nay, my lord ;
But fortune is a wheel.

Douglas. Douglas the spring
And axis of its going. Fare you well. [*Exit with Soldiers.*
[*Enter Lindsey.*]

King Robert. Lindsey !

Albany. Black, travel-stained !

King Robert [*aside*]. I will not ask—
Not blab my weakness nor express my shame.
A question would command my blood to rise
Unkingly to my face ; my voice is rough. [*Goes apart.*

Albany. All done ?

Lindsey. He's safe.

King Robert [*aside*].

That's well.

Albany.

And lodged within

The castle's dungeon ?

Lindsey.

Yes.

King Robert [*aside*].

There must he stay

Till, chastened by the rod of discipline,

He learn to know himself.

Albany.

Good jailers—ay ?

Lindsey. Yes, excellent ; such do their duty well.

King Robert [*aside*]. The father must not kiss his son
henceforth,

But painfully chastise. I scarce can bear

To look into the face of any man

With honest children of a fair repute.

Albany. How yielded he ?

Lindsey.

In passion and in fear.

King Robert [*aside*]. I'll leave this list'ning. It will move
my love

To force the bolt I've strain'd my will to plant

Across the door of Mercy.

Albany [*to King Robert*]. You would hence ?

The matter of the prince's durance waits

But time to fructify in glad event.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Falkland Castle. A Dungeon. Rothsay.*

Rothsay. I cannot tell if it is night or day—
How many nights and days have gone outside,
And I been hungry here. 'Tis all one night,
One dream of anguish. I can only think
Of bread, bread—bread !—the pulling hot desire
That ever strains to seize upon the thought
And eat it into nothing. Oh, without
Are many cornfields—and the river ! God !
I scarcely can remember anything
But the white floods, and the last scrap of meat
I emptied from my wallet. Once I fed,

Could drink at will, and all the lads about
 Laughing together. Past all things, 'tis strange
 That once I laughed. Would I had ne'er been born !
 I'm nothing but a heap of crying bones
 And maddened flesh. Oh that the earth would gape !
 Would it were famished too !—The holy bread,
 They give it to the dying . . . and the taste
 Would make me live. But I'm forgotten clean,
 As I had lived a thousand years ago—
 Mere unrequiring dust—and every atom
 Is grasping like a murderer ! I'll lie
 Flat on the ground, for then my hunger's less,
 It pities my submission. On my face !
 They put them with it upward in the grave
 That they may rise ; but I would fall and hide
 Where life can never come. The other way
 Is hope—the proneness of my head despair.

[Throws himself down and sobs.]

Selkirk *[without.]* The dog is still.

Wright *[without.]* Contented with his bones.

Selkirk *[without.]* Ha, ha ! good wit—a very lively wit !

[They enter.]

Rothsay *[springing up.]* You're bringing me some food ?

Selkirk. It's here within.

Rothsay. Give it me ! give it me !

Selkirk. Take it from me, then.

Rothsay. Where is it ? I would rather look on it
 Than sun or anything that eyes can see !

Wright. Ho ! it's about him !

Rothsay. Where ? I shall go mad
 With thinking of its nearness. Give it me.

Selkirk. If you can take it from my stomach's grasp,
 You're welcome to it.

Rothsay. Oh ! With hands, knees, lips,
 I pray for bread ; and if 'twill move your grace,
 I'll press the floor with brow as well as knees.

Wright. King Selkirk ! bless us !

Rothsay.

As you're men, and made

In this poor fading image ; as you have
 Lips—flesh that fails, as fire at curfew-time,
 Unless 'tis fed ; as you have appetite,
 That struggles like a lion in his net
 Till the first mouthful frees it ; as you've blood,
 That is a river dried by famishment ;
 As you have teeth, tongue, stomach, all the parts
 That give us glad renewal ; if you've known
 Faintness and hollow suffering and thirst ;
 If you have seen the table spread, have drunk
 Your fill with friends, have tasted the cold brook
 Or seen the harvest grow, pity my want,
 My pain, my tortured memory.

Selkirk.

How fine

We talk for belly's sake! As to your feasts,
 I've seen you with your swinish company
 Rocking the bench from which you thrust us out
 To the mastiff i' the yard.

Wright.

We'll cast you now

Back to your barking stomach.

Rothsay.

Pity me !

I am so young—so young in my desire
 For food—so strong, so helpless are my pangs.
 Have you fed children?—I am scarce eighteen.
 I've all their need. If you will fetch me bread,
 I'll love you better than my father.

Selkirk.

Ay,

That were small love, and scarcely worth a kick.

[*To Wright.*] Come, we'll begone ; our dinner's on the air.
 'Twill taste the better—la !—for this lean talk. [*Exeunt.*]

Rothsay. Bread, bread ! The mocking stones ![*Flings himself on the ground.*]

Would I were old,

With one weak thread to crack and so to die ;
 But, oh ! the mighty cable of my youth
 That knots me to despair !—I ever thought

Death was a shadow.—I myself am Death.
 I fed and never knew it ; now I starve.
 Here is the skeleton I've seen in books !
 'Tis I—the knarled and empty bones.—Here, here—
 The grinning dints ! I thought Death anywhere
 But near my life ; and it is in the pith
 And centre of my body. Horrible !
 I was conceived, shaped in Mortality's
 Own ribb'd and ghastly image ; but the bread,
 The bread that is denied me, hid the thing
 I am—it clothed me. I am naked now.
 Its clothes I want to dress this skeleton,
 And wrap it from my sight. Death is not dead ;
 O God ! he lives in me—in me must die ;
 And I must watch him with these burning eyes,
 Like candles set aflame upon my corpse.
 Hell ? Hell itself to this were Paradise,
 For there there is no waiting for an end,
 Heart-wringing expectation of a term
 To madden'd vigil. Would I were in Hell,
 Immortal and contemned. Ah, torturing fires,
 They're in my brow ; come out and circle me,
 So only I may burn with you, nor stop
 To all Eternity.—A sound outside !
 Out in the blessed world where there's the sun,
 The fresh-grown wheat, the wild carousing wind,
 Man's gay, habitual intercourse, the chime
 Of frequent laughter, happy wonted sleep,
 The daily meal. Bread, bread ! I cannot starve,
 Grow strange to all that gave me joy. O Earth,
 Sprout me some strangled grains here in the dark ;
 For see ! I die because I have no bread.—
 Bread, bread ! Oh ! oh !

Woman [without]. Now prythee hold thy peace !
 A cur at midnight has not sharper throat.
 Peace, peace !

Rothsay. They're starving me. . . .

Woman. Then come this way.
 I've got some tiny oaten cakes. But mind !
 No yelping !—Lord, to have it follow you !—
 Now thou'lt be still ?

Rothsay. As death, if I may live.
 Where are . . . ?

Woman. Here, here ! I'll slip it through the bars.
 Caught it ? . . . Nay, honey, do not eat so fast.
 My word o' faith ! It is a youngster—this—
 An' thin as trees i' the winter.

Rothsay. More—one more !

Woman. There—gently ! 'Tis so dim. His poor pinched
 sides
 Have known some soft embraces. Hey, to think
 He is not in his coffin !

Rothsay. What ?

Woman. Nay then—

Rothsay. Another one !

Woman. I'll put thee all I have.

Rothsay. But you will come again—not let me die,
 Go to that other prison, where the worms
 Cling like a second famine, and the walls
 Are built as firm as these, but have no bars
 Where comfort can slip in.

Woman. I'll come, poor lad.
 What is thy name ?

Rothsay. David—Prince David.

Woman. What !
 Our bonnie wicked prince !—our madcap prince,
 Of whom they tell such tales ! The Lord above !
 How came you here, my liege ?

Rothsay. I cannot tell.
 My father sent me.

Woman. Good King Robert ?

Rothsay. Yes.
 Curse him !

Woman. Hush ! hush !

Rothsay. It is a father's deed.
 I thought to foster was his very charge ;
 Even the beasts do that. But you are come,
 And have so kind a voice. Is't possible
 To let me have some water ?

Woman. How, my lord ?
 There is no jug will pour between the bars,
 Nor any vessel.

Rothsay. I shall die of drought ;
 And the bread makes it worse. My lips are stiff
 As clay in August. I can eat no more.
 There, father, to your face ! [*Throws down a cake.*]

Woman. Patience, my lord,
 I cannot think he knows.

Rothsay. He's cast me off,
 Prey to the thirst and hunger he has chained
 Within me from my birth ! He's slipped the leash !
 Help me !

Woman. I'll do the utmost woman can.
 [*Aside.*] There's Emmeline the armourer's wife.—Be sure
 I'll help you if I can.

Rothsay. Then I shall live,
 Live and be young again—perchance escape.
 I will be patient—there's the sound of life
 Within your voice ; it wakens me. You've seen
 The sun to-day, and I shall see 't again.
 You've brought me hope.—I cannot talk.

Woman. Nay, nay.—
 Bless me ! His eyes still ask !—I'll come anon. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*Another part of Falkland Castle. Enter
 Emmeline.*

Emmeline [*sings*].

Death hath ta'en my child to nurse,
 Yet he keeps his shrill small cry ;
 Death would choke him in his hearse,
 Pat of earth his lullaby ;

But my baby cannot rest
While the milk leaps in my breast.

Death must come with famish'd mouth,

Draw the bubbling draughts away,
Ere he still the baby's drouth,

Turn the pucker'd lips to clay ;
While the white drops trickle down,
Death will ne'er uncrease his frown.

Come, then, Death, and dig a grave

At my heart's spring, ere it burst
Its twin-brimming fountains brave

At the wailing of his thirst ;
Quiet in your arms he'll stay,
If you drain his life away.

[*Enter Country Woman.*

Woman. Now sweet good soul . . .

Emmeline. I must not speak with you.

Woman. 'Tis pert for such as I to say a word ;
But answer me one thing, good mistress, one,—
Have you not heard strange cries ?

Emmeline. I thought the birds
Were noisy ; but 'tis clearer and distressed.
I've heard it many times.

Woman. 'Tis not the birds,
But a poor soul that's caged.

Emmeline. A prisoner ?

Woman. Ay, mistress, an' they're clemming him to death.
If you could see him, mistress, look on him !
His hair is tattered like the yellow fern
On our December wolds ; his cheeks—nay, hear !—
As snows in thaw are dwindled, an' he weeps.
He's but a youth, and, mistress, he's our prince.

Emmeline. Then let us help him.

Woman. I have ta'en him cakes—
You know how fine we make 'em, an' 'twas well
The prison-bars are close. I fairly quaked
To see his greed. But he is thirsty still.

Emmeline. We'll take him drink.

Woman. Alas, the bars are close
Beyond all hope, poor soul !

Emmeline. Can we do naught ?

Woman. I cannot, mistress . . . but—

Emmeline. You think I can.

I'm ready.

Woman. But you never will forgive
That I should tell you—

Emmeline. Do not frighten me,
Or say to me aught I must never hear.
What can I do ?

Woman. Give what you gave the child . . .
I speak it not in lewdness . . . but your milk
Is all the charity that God will grant.—
I'll go away.

If you should wave your handkerchief, I'll come
An' take you to the place. [Exit.

Emmeline. He is not pure.
None mention him with honour, and the woman
Who pleads for him hath lost her holy fame.
It may be she'd beguile my innocence,
And draw me into sin with pity's net.
But still it was not in her look or words ;
For falsehood leaps not thus within the eyes,
Nor from the mouth springs forth ; it ever comes
With tardiness and caution. She is true,
And then . . . O woman's shrine on which God lays
A husband's faith and a babe's confidence,
White altar for Love's consecrated gifts,
Could Pity desecrate the pale retreat
Of modest wedded peace and motherhood?—
The milk is throbbing in my breast, to stay
The grief of hunger. Oh, I must not close
The fountain of God's mercy with rough pride,
For He will keep it holy, and the eyes
Of misery are pure. In our dread times
Of war and woe, too many are the veils

Raised from our easier days that I should shrink
 To stir my clinging wimple. I will go.
 He had a mother once, and as her child
 I'll think of him and go.—My handkerchief.

[*Re-enter Woman.*]

Woman. The saints be with you !

Emmeline.

Take me where I go.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*The same. A Dungeon. Rothsay and Emmeline.*

Rothsay. Do not leave me yet.—

Emmeline. I'm called.

Rothsay. You must not put me from the milk,
 And leave me. God ! I'm fed with innocence,
 And like a baby fall upon my sleep.
 Keep close !

Emmeline. My lord, lie down upon the ground ;
 It may be you will rest.

Rothsay. Ay, if you watch.

I cannot sleep alone.

The very air is starved and shrieks at me
 For the want of human breath. Oh, let me feel
 The succour of a voice. Put me to sleep
 With some soft cradle-words.

Emmeline. My memory
 Is crazed ; I cannot think of them.

Woman [*without*]. Oh, fly !
 Mistress, be quick, there is the sound of steps.

Rothsay. Unless you watch me, Slumber will not come,
 For I should be too secret to be found
 Of one so blind. I cannot lay my hands
 On any of my senses ; all's confused ;
 All's lost. . . .
 I've got one little cake within my vest—
 I shall forget where I have hidden it,

Unless you watch. It's growing dizzy now,
And you keep drawing back.

Emmeline [*turning away*]. Lie down, my lord.
It's rest you need.

Woman [*without*]. Oh, mistress, we are lost !

Rothsay. What ! You are come again !

Emmeline. To bid good-night,
And settle you to sleep : you'll say your prayers ?

Rothsay. I have no prayers ; I'm back now to the
child. . . .

It's a land of milk and honey. . . . Oh ! I drowse. . . .
Don't stir !

Emmeline. He's breathing heavily ; he's gone.

Woman [*without*]. They're on us !

Emmeline. He's asleep.

Now may I——

[*Enter Wright, Selkirk, with the Country Woman.*]

Selkirk. Hang !

Woman. For pity's sake, save her !
She's kind and young : 'twas I that forced her come
With story of the pain in yonder cell.
She came not of herself.

Wright. Nor by herself
Shall feel the noose. The gallows carries two,
Old nurse of Satan !

Woman. You are beasts, and worse
Because you look like men, to starve the child
Within there—pinch his bonnie youth and wring
Tears from his royal eyes ; and then to hang
This dearie. . . .

Wright. Ho ! a cord ! She'll deafen us.
Sly harlots !

Selkirk. He's spent everything on such.
Now 'tis your time to pay. He's bankrupt, lass.

Emmeline. These insults worse than kill me.

Woman. Hold your tongues,
You savages !

Selkirk. Old watch and bawd !

Emmeline. Ye heavens,
Make haste to end my hearing !

Wright. Off with them.
The deil ! He's gone to sleep. Spite o' the bars,
You've charmed him.

Emmeline. When he wakes . . . and oh ! we're dead
I must not think.

Woman. He will not wake again.
Heaven bless you ! he will wake in Paradise.
Ye murderers ! you'll have it hot in hell.
God's mother, curse you !

Emmeline. Hush ! we will not speak.
Let us die still.

Selkirk. Cords ! cords !

Wright. Then gurgle out
Your devil's threats !

Emmeline. Oh ! . . . if my Henry comes,
He'll find me dead and learn about my death ;
He will not like it here ; but when he's taught
A little of the angels, he will smile
And take me to his arms. I'm ready now. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*King Robert, and Prince James on the hearth,
Albany, and the Duchess Marjorie.*

King Robert. The wind is raging ! it afflicts my head,
And stirs it to confusion.

Albany. A wild night
For those not warmly housed ; of dark presage
To our camped soldiers if they couch to rise
To-morrow to a battle. As they lie,
Their death-shrieks like pale ghosts will stride to them
Across the wailing air, and—curse the fools !—
Unman them for the fray.

King Robert. O Robert, peace !

I shudder.—Draw up nearer to the fire.
 An ingle-nook is gracious at such hours,
 When *all* are gathered round it.

Albany. Truth ! The glow
 Is pleasant, and doth ruddily assure
 The heart of safety.

King Robert. 'Tis a black, black night.
 D'you think it cold ?

Albany. Scarcely for March.

King Robert. And yet
 The blaze is welcome.

Albany. 'Tis a trifle chill
 For those of fearful mind.

King Robert [aside]. Then he is cold—
 James, shall you be afraid to sleep to-night
 In all this noisy darkness ?

Prince James. Father, no !—
 I'm not afraid.—My noble hound, you've got
 A comfortable ear.

King Robert. The dauntless child !

Albany. Our army will be routed by the air
 Before it face the English. May to-night
 Find it within some guarded vale that's slow
 To open gates and parley with the storm.
 There snaps a limb of some aghasted oak !
 The Devils make Inferno of our woods.

King Robert. Hark ! Listen ! [*Aside.*] Oh, I wonder if
 he wears
 The little relic that his mother tied
 About his neck.

Albany. I'm speaking of the troops—

King Robert [to Prince James]. Will David sleep like
 you ?

Prince James. He fears the dark.
 And, father—

Albany. James, you're pressing on the dog.
 His sides can scarcely bear your elbow-joint,

Though willing for your head.

Duchess Marjorie. Is he asleep?

Prince James. No, no ; not he ! He's listening by the fire,

As we are, to the rattle out of doors.

Albany. Ah, as I told you, when my words were crashed
By falling of the oak, our army lies
In danger from the weather.

King Robert. My poor lad,
My David, who is fearful of the dark,
Would he were here this bleak and scolding night !
He used to throw a cushion on the floor,
And lay him down as featly as the hound,
His foolish yellow head against my knee ;
And so he'd laugh and chat and sing old songs,
Or gaily sneer at our last grave debate,
Drop sudden crude suggestions that anon
Our older counsel ripened into act ;
Until for some light word I'd give rebuke,
When either with a peal of raillery
He'd toss me back a penitent bright face,
Or with a shaded humour spring apart,
No place from me too far. Good Albany,
You would not have our Rothsay longer shut
In such grim-tempered darkness ?

Albany. Fifteen days !
'Tis but a slender punishment, my liege.

King Robert. Enough, enough ! The terror of this night
Doubles the term of his captivity,
And makes of it a month.

Albany. We'll send for him
Before the week hath touched its sacred goal.
[*Aside.*] By this he must be dead.

King Robert. Why now I'm warm in spirit, which the fire
With all the urgent comfort of its face
Could not effect ; I'll send for him anon.

[*Albany paces the room.*

How glad I am in soul ! Yet I confess
I'm half afraid to meet him. Now all's well,
I'll think of him no more.

[*Enter Allan.*]

Allan. Your porridge, sire.

King Robert. Put it away, I have no appetite ;
The turmoil makes me disinclined to eat.
Good Allan, set it on the hearth and stir.
Have you all supped ? [*To Albany.*] Why do you pace
about ?

Albany. My foot is gone to sleep.

King Robert. When did you sup ?

Albany. Like you, I have no stomach for a meal.

[*Aside.*] All that I eat is heavy in my throat,
As if I gulped the bait on Hell's own hook. [*Re-seats himself.*]
This rain will smear our army's pride.

King Robert. Too sure.

Yet are the troopers hardy and rough-bred,
Trained by strict weather to all skiey chance,
And led by one whose buff coat of bull's hide
Enfeebles all the water of the clouds,
And makes it folly.

Prince James. Black old Archibald !
Allan, he is a mountain, and his voice
A waterfall—Give me that oaten lump
Upon your spoon.—There, dog !—another one !—
Mouth open !

King Robert. Allan, stir the embers up ;
They lay themselves to rest.

Prince James. A blaze, a blaze !
Brave ! They put out red tongues, and roar for food
Like the big lion.

King Robert. But the wind is shrill
Above their noise.—What's that ? [*Shriek without.*]

Albany. What ?

Allan. Some one dies ;—
Mother of Christ !—for look you at the dog ;

He shivers as an ague, an' his whine
Is like a sinner's, drowning in hell's pitch.
The Banshee ! Hark !

Duchess Marjorie. Allan is credulous.
'Tis an old story when the wind is sad,
And wails about a corner. By the tower
I've noted that it cries most audibly.

King Robert. Ah, Allan ! how you struck upon my fear,
And thumped on it as 'twere a crazy drum.
Brother, a woman is more rational
Than three old men.

Allan. Well, sire, I know the wind
Hath got no breast from which such grief can moan ;
An' why, sire, should the dog be scared with things
That touch not man ?

King Robert. Nay, nay, but he is still. [*Shriek repeated.*
Again, again ! It is a voice, my God !—
You know it, Albany ; your eyes are cow'd,
You cannot lift them, tho' you shake your head.
It calls me, calls !—Allan, you say the voice
Is full of death and direful prophecy.
O Allan ! do you think you know its tones ?

Duchess Marjorie. The same the blast makes ever when
like Jews
It lifts its lamentations by a wall.

Albany. I think 'tis so.

King Robert. Think, think ! But is your thought
The very cause ? or do the elements
Speak out what we are deaf to in our souls,
And force a hearing ?

Albany. Should I know ? How ? why ?
This is mere fooling. Mass ! D' you think of me
As privy-counsellor to Doomsday, man !
It may be hurricane ; it may be speech.

[*Shriek third time repeated.*

King Robert. It is *his* voice !—Your shoulder, Albany—
Open the door ! No matter if I fall.

Will it not open—never? Does it keep me
Like a tomb's gate eternally at stand?
Burst every lock!

[*It opens.*]

David, my son, my son, thy father hears!
Thou shalt be freed, shalt come to me again.
Nothing shall hinder—chains, nor bars, nor bolts;
Nothing shall dare oppose my tyrant love
That binds and looses. David, thou art free
This moment. I have heard thee call, my son,
And all my soul hath answered *thou art free.*

Albany. Come in! The madness of this howling air
Hath made you its interpreter. Come in!
Let it rage on in accents of its own,
And give it not our language. Come away!

King Robert. He calls no more; his misery is done,
For I have promised comfort and release.

Albany [*aside*]. This burthen on my shoulder is too much.
Brother, you lean
With desperate weight on me. A lighter hold!
Pr'ythee, to save my breath hang not so hard.

King Robert. The very soul of hearing finds no sound,
No slightest human sigh in all this wind.

Albany. Now shall you in with me.

King Robert. How dare you put
My son and I apart?

Albany. The wind convicts!
If you give ear
To a chance spasm in the air to fix
On me a guiltiness . . .

King Robert [*still listening*]. There may be more.

Duchess Marjorie. They are possessed. I thought that
Albany

Had nerve and reason stronger.

Allan. The king's hair
Flies round like foam; his breath is much distressed.
We must entreat him back,—an' yet to stir
Seems irreligious.

Prince James. I will go. Stay here,
And I'll beseech him shut the door again.

King Robert. Nothing ! 'Tis gone ; and yet I fancy still
It bleats upon the air.

Albany. No ; on my soul,
All's over. . . .

King Robert. Stay !

Albany [*aside*]. I've said it audibly.
My lips have witness'd 'gainst me.

Prince James, Father, sir !
You're cold and weak to bear this chilly gale.
Do not stay longer out.

King Robert. I will not, boy.
James !

Albany. You are wise to move.

King Robert. My child, your hand.
Albany, shut the door [*returns to his seat, led by Prince James*]. And, boy, to bed !

It was the wind that shrieked. [*Exit Prince James.*]

Duchess Marjorie. Well, heard you aught
But windy fret and uproar ?

Albany. If my liege
Will pardon, I'll go start a messenger
To Falkland, that your mind may be at peace.—
[*Aside.*] This wanton blast beguiles me. Conscience is
A fool o' the weather and the time o' night.—
I've your authority to send this man ?

King Robert. That of my fatherhood and royalty,
Which hand in hand instructs you so to do.

Albany. I will ; and if we do not meet again—
As I'll retire to rest—good-night, my liege ;
And keep your mind from brooding on the fears
Absence and Love, with magic craft combined,
Both sorcerers, have raised for us this eve.

King Robert. Robin, good-night, if you can shift to sleep.
[*Exit Albany.*]

Cries in the whirl of night bode . . . ?

Duchess Marjorie.

Nothing.

Allan.

Death.

King Robert. I think you are mistaken there—distress.

Allan. As you will, sire.

King Robert. And are they near of blood,
Or even kin at all for whose decease
The air is said to toll?

Allan.

I scarcely know.

But I should say for any fate hath put
Near to our int'rest, sire.

King Robert.

Then may this groan

For Douglas rive the throbbing atmosphere.

The army on whose welfare I have set

My nearest hopes may, at this very hour,

Perish in blood, their leader struck to earth,

With none to ring a dirge but senseless gusts.

Duchess Marjorie [aside]. He almost smiles. Ah ! deepest
selfishness

That would prefer the doom of honest souls,

Led by a great and high-deserving chief,

To loss of its own pampered libertine.—

My father by the law, you give to fate

Him, who by nature is my father's self.

I am his daughter ; but I'm blunt in soul,

And you so tender-strung that, at all cost,

You get you comfort.

King Robert.

Oh, I'm base indeed

For such oblivion to cross my sense

As hid your dear relationship to him

I fancied slain.

Duchess Marjorie. Nay, I am used to such.

King Robert. My girl, forgive me, for you cannot know
What it is works within a parent's breast ;

'Tis the begetting makes the difference,

And so my passion grew.

Duchess Marjorie.

Your subjects?

King Robert.

Hush !

This is all talk ; we'll build no argument
 On these disjointed rumours of the storm.
 Your father is not bleeding. Cheerly, lass !
 All's well. [*Exit Duchess Marjorie with a distant obeisance.*
 'Tis very quiet out of doors—
 Unnatural !—I'll go and look at James. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.—*Same Apartment. Enter Walter, Randolph, and Allan.*

Walter. Nothing from Falkland ?

Allan. Nothing.

Walter. From the wars ?

Allan. Nothing.

Walter. An empty mouth, an empty mouth !

Allan. Better than have it filled with bitterness.

I look for no good news.

Walter. Thou croaking man,
 Thou raven, soul of evil augury,
 Wherefore bad news ?

Allan. It is the feeling, man,
 And the dull sky.

Walter. God bless your sense, I feel
 As merry, ay, as merry as the morn,
 The cricket, lark, or any earthly thing
 That figures my condition ; and the clouds
 From sullen flash to gay as seconds pass,
 So I can build my humour on the sky
 As well as you.

Randolph. You can, my chanticler !

Walter. Marry, as thus : the prince will home again,
 The king for very love will give him gold,
 The gold will give us feast and merriment,
 And jolly cups and wenches' jocund lips ;
 All these delights in turn will give us heart
 To celebrate authentic victory
 Of Scotland o'er the bragging English hinds.

[*Enter Ralph.*]

Ralph. O lads, defeat !

Walter. Come, come !— an ugly game !
We'll play at victory, if play we must.
Victoria !

Ralph. All's over, all is lost ;
Douglas a captive, with a gored right eye
And spouting wounds ; our host but helpless limbs
And bleeding impotence that cannot meet
The wing'd attack of the mere birds of Heav'n.
The English Hotspur and our traitor March
Fell on the trustful bands, adorn'd with spoil,
And shook them to the nakedness of death.

Allan. Where fell the woful chance ?

Ralph. At Homildon.

Walter. Allan, thou wry-faced prophet, I have done !
The prince will next be either churchyard's corpse
Or church's convert. I will never speak
High-stomach'd language more.

Randolph. How went the fight ?

Ralph. Why thus :—our Douglas, in audacious fit
(Foolhardy as his wont), in fated hour,
Bore up our army to a topping brow
Of moorland, naked, tree-unbonneted,
And open to the arrows' swift assault—
There held our men a target to the foe,
A troop for slaughter ; till a voice arose
That thrill'd the pulseless manhood of our host
With surgent valour,—high it rose and clear
Above the whizzing darts, the foeman's yell,—
Higher, as if it scorn'd opposing sound—
John Swinton's knightly voice that cried aloft :
“Why stand we here as stags upon the hill,
Dart-stricken brutes, when down these drenchèd slopes
Naught hinders that we rush upon the foe
To fight as victors or to fall as men ?”
They wake ; they gather with a forward sway ;

Death is forgotten, ay, and deadly feud ;
 For young lord Gordon, whose good sire was slain
 By Swinton's hand, unmindful of revenge,
 Bow'd down and pray'd for knighthood from the sword
 Proved mortal to his house ; for "ne'er again,"
 Said he, "shall I encounter one so brave."
 Amid the surging bands he said the vow,
 Received the hasty stroke ; then with a rush
 The two fair soldiers clave them out a path
 To th' English centre and were overborne——

[*Enter Albany and Lindsey.*]

Albany. With all our host. 'Tis miserable news !

[*Lindsey draws him apart.*]

Lindsey. The streets are full of citizens grim-brow'd,
 With rancour in their throats.

Albany. I like it not
 That thus they are incensed ; for in such mood
 There's not a crime, however strange and black,
 But they will hang it on their rulers' necks
 To make a shame at which to point and jeer.

Lindsey. It carries danger, as your grace conceives,
 And much I fear what other news may come.

Albany. Ay, Lindsey, there's the peril's very head.
 We must be firm and stablsh'd in our looks,
 And in our speech most sad and circumspect.
 Yon is Ramorgny, and the messenger
 I sent upon his heels to slay the men
 Who did the deed that never must be known.

[*Enter Ramorgny and Messenger.*]

Good news from Falkland ? When returns the prince ?

Ramorgny. Never !

Albany. A most impossible, loathed word !
 [*Aside to Ramorgny.*] Colour your ashen cheeks, you
 raving fool !—

What, in my castle do you say he died ?

Messenger. It was a sort of dysent'ry, your grace.

Ramorgny [*aside*]. Oh, if it were !—his face impeach'd
my soul,

A keen, malignant, bitter, cursing face—

Albany. Have they yet buried him ?

Messenger.

Your grace, they have,

With private ceremonial.

Albany.

Where ? where ?

Messenger. Lindores.

Ramorgny.

And there he lies with the quick fiends

Bound in his stony clay—

Albany [*aside*].

Tame your wild face !—

Fronting this doom I stand so terror-struck

That wail and grief are cow'd as childish things

Before an elder agitation.

The king !

Lindsey. I dare not think.—[*Advancing to Walter*,] The
prince is dead.

Walter. What, the dear prince !

Allan.

The kind young prince !

Ralph.

Our mate !

Allan. His spirit pass'd away that stormy night.

Did he die hard ?

Albany.

Why ?

Messenger.

No, 'twas short and fierce,

A feverous infection.

Allan.

Prison-caught ?

Oh, the poor king !

Walter.

Mine eyes are wilful, Ralph.

I loved him. An' he'll drink a rouse no more.

Ralph. Our days are over.

Randolph.

We'd best go repent ;

For there's no liveliness in any sin,

Or chink of coin within our company.

Ralph. I'll treat thee to a flagon for his sake.

Randolph. An' while our throats are moist we'll pipe a
mass.

Ralph. Nay, pardie ; but we'll give the priest his cup,

And set him to the chanting.

Randolph. Come your way. [*Exeunt.*]

Albany. This is the very hour my brother stirs.
He will be here anon, and who will speak?

Lindsey. Not I, your grace.

Ramorgny. [*aside*]. Nor I, by my lost soul.

Messenger. Nor I, for all the worth of very life.

Albany. Varlet!

Messenger. The torture shall not move my lips.

Ramorgny. Death shall not force my tongue to utterance.

Lindsey. Ruin and exile shall not ope my mouth.

Albany. Then must I do 't.

Lindsey. You must, your grace.

Ramorgny. And will.

Messenger. We humbly pray you.

Albany [*aside*]. How my flesh is thrill'd

And my speech curdles. Let me face the deed

One moment and grow strong—then bury it

Beneath the soil of consciousness so deep

The death-bed quake alone can rive the sod

That over-presses it. With this resolve

I have built up my fortitude—I will.

[*Enter King Robert, Prince James, and the Duchess Marjorie.*]

King Robert. O woe is me for a defeated king!

In vain they changed my name from woful John

To favour'd Robert—vainly was it done.

Ye are all silent. Is it fond respect

To hoary shame and vanquish'd royalty?

No wonder that your brows are black to-day.

Albany. It is the mournful badge of minds bereaved.

King Robert. Many the dead to mourn.

Albany. One more, my liege.

King Robert. Is my son well?

Albany. Ay, as we count it bless'd.

King Robert. Not dead?

[*Pause; Exit Ramorgny wildly.*]

Allan. Sweet majesty, at peace with God.

King Robert. Dead, dead ! You tell an old man *he* is dead.
 I've look'd on in a cradle—who was full
 Of light and movement—when ? Whom I begot.
 Help, help ! I'm sinking !—Whither ? To the depths
 To find him who for evermore is gone ?—
 No end to where I sink ! [*Faints.*

Albany. A pillow here !
 Raise up his head—this is unmanly grief,
 Tho' eloquent for pardon. Chafe his hands.
 We'll keep a silence till the fit is pass'd.

* * * * *

King Robert. Oh, I shall never find him. I have gone
 To deepest depths of Hell and utmost space—
 For higher there's no warranty to go.—
 Still he may be at Falkland.

Albany. Brother, no.
 At Lindores is he buried.

King Robert. Put from sight !—
 God help my unbelief !

Allan. Be still. He prays.

Duchess Marjorie. When did he die ?

Messenger. The night of the great storm.

Duchess Marjorie. Of what complaint ?

Messenger. A fever.

Duchess Marjorie. And you said
 He's buried ?

King Robert. Stop this catechism ! Stop !
 A king's command. She's had no offspring—she !

Duchess Marjorie. None.

King Robert. Allan, ask them if he died a-bed,
 Or on the floor as he had been a dog,
 Who was my first begotten ?

Messenger. There was straw.

King Robert. Shut his vile mouth !

Albany. Control this lawless grief.

King Robert. How dare you speak who sway'd my
 anxious love

With sly, Satanic counsel ; you who drew
 The net you forced me spin about his life ;
 You who, miscall'd my brother, art my foe,
 A murderer, false witness. 'Twas your speech
 Beguiled my fatherhood ; 'twas in your fort,
 Your nest of bloodshed, that my son breathed out
 The last of his short days. Traitor, begone !
 I read you through and through.

Albany.

I will not stay.

My pride instructs me, till this rage is out,
 To spare my ill-starr'd, guiltless presence. Thus
 I take my leave, till calmer thoughts shall claim
 A penitent recall. Be comforted.

King Robert. A hard-mouth'd, shallow wish ! O Albany,
 'Tis but the sword's point that is in my heart ;
 All the long cruel blade has yet to cut. [*Exit Albany.*]
 I know not how to grieve ; but time to come
 Will find me perfect at it. This is strange,
 That all my sorrow is but prophecy.

Allan. Could he but weep !

Cries [without.]

Curses on Albany !

The traitor ! murderer ! our prince, our lord !

King Robert. My David, thou wilt never be a king.
 God lets me put that little strip of balm
 About my bleeding love. It falls on thee,
 [*Clasping James*] My last, last son, the whelming heritage,
 On thee, who still art mine ! Here, to my breast,
 And let it feel possession—carry it,
 And crush it into permanence !

Allan.

He weeps.

The red grief stains his lids.

King Robert.

Thou shalt not go,

As went thy brother. Oh, to think he's dead !
 Within his fair and newly-fashion'd case
 The pendulum of life no longer moves ;
 His face no longer answers to the hours,
 Marking with lips and eyes their various flight ;

Time has no mirror in his countenance ;
There is no voice in him to sound its lapse ;
The cunning clock of his mortality
Is stopp'd for ever, and my heart hath lost
The count of all her days.

Prince James. Oh, do not weep !

King Robert. Not till I have my privacy. I'll go
Straight to my inner chamber. Allan, come,
Whom I must burthen with this grievèd frame. [*Exeunt.*

Walter. Well I believe that Albany is false.
He never loved the prince. I've deadly fear
That there hath been foul play. Oh, if there has
'Twill be reveal'd ; for sin doth ever blab
And show the woman thro' its darkest crafts.
To think that all our merriment is done,
Our youth closed up and seal'd ; our comrade gone
To lie beneath the ground where we must go.

[*Re-enter Allan.*]

How fares the king ?

Allan. But just beyond the door
He fell at once into a second faint,
And so was borne to bed, where now he lies
As if extinct. I am suspicious, Walt.
Let's go and hear what rumour holds the crowd. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Edinburgh: Room in the Monastery of Holy Cross. Enter Walter and Allan.*

Walter. His grace of Albany will soon be here ;
He comes to be acquitted by the king
Of any share in God's prerogative—
A natural death.

Allan. Keep down thy bitter voice ;
No man creates a fever.

Walter. Not so sharp !
I think thy speech is full as sour as mine ;
Man cannot starve his fellow ; he's too soft
And pitiful for that.

Allan. Oh whisper me,
If you must blab street tales.

Walter. No fear to speak
What opes the general lip and blanches it.
Think you, mine Allan, that the king hath heard
How all men say his elder son was slain.

Allan. Ay, Walt ; he will not eat until we name
Prince James ; then shudders through his ancient form,
And groans within the hollow of his chest,
"Starved, starved !" I never knew so large a grief.
You lose the man within his sorrow's might.

Walter. Oh, here he comes, as if he'd slept in tombs.
Poor royal father !

[*Enter King Robert.*]

King Robert. Everything prepared.

I think my brother will not keep me long ;
I'm troubled that I spake so hastily
To one of my own blood ; it raises fear,
And makes my conscience feverish and ill,
To think how I accused him in my wrath.
It cannot be ; I ever found him kind.
And his high office breeds in common souls
Tale-bearing envy.—You once served my son,
If I mistake not ?

Walter. Sire, I loved him well.

King Robert. Allan, this knave shall wait on me—you
two

Who both have loved my son.—D' you know, last night
I dreamt of him. Within the monast'ry
Of far Lindores I saw the straight cold tomb,
And the straight form—all the round lines of youth,
The full serenity of cheek and chin
Cut clearer in the moonlight's marble mould ;
The brow a blank page of the whitest peace ;
Yet round about twirled a dim company,
Grey sprites of Famine, shaking poppy-stems
And stalks of corn that wagged their lavish heads,
Deriding the lean body underneath
Its effigy, that still and satisfied
Lay close against the wall. God ! to that tomb
My love is pilgrim—with my heart's red drops
Telling an awful penance.

Walter. My dear lord,

And new kind master, do not ever dwell
On such grim churchyard thoughts. We've heaven and bliss.

King Robert. I cannot yet go further than the tomb ;
There lies the ruined body that I built,
The fair new city where I sent my hopes,
Carrying fire from my own shrine of life
To settle and increase. Yet I, even I,
Put out the hearth and overthrew the home
And pierced the very heart of my desires.

Allan. His grace your brother comes. You'll take your seat
Upon the dais yonder, whereto flock
The people of your household ; see !

[*King Robert seats himself.*]

King Robert. I live
Within this painted nothingness—this world
That stares into mine eyes and holds them not,
This insolent, vain show. [Covers his face.]

Allan. We'll stand aside.
[Enter Albany, Lindsey, and other Nobles with their trains.]

Albany. My liege, I break your meditation
For nothing less than honour, for amends
To stabbed and bleeding innocence, yourself
Have wounded first and foremost. These, your lords,
My peers and gracious equals, do acquit
My dear renown from stain of that dread crime
Whose breath would smirch my whiteness. Parliament,
After all due enquiry, strictest search,
And earnest fanning of the fearful charge,
Hath found it chaff, as these can testify.

Lindsey My liege, we can.

Earl of Buchan. There is no evidence.

We frankly own him guiltless of this sin.

King Robert. Thus we accept him with our penitence.—
O Robert !

Albany. Sir, I'd have you quite convinced.
I'd be impregnable in pardon. Think !
Without a motive stronger than herself,
Would Nature so unnatural become
As spill her proper blood ? That so she would
Is beyond all belief. In motive lies
Sole credit to my having done the deed
That seared me in your favour. First my love—
Which, though the chastisement its care advised,
Was turned of God to doom, thereby received
No taint or flaw in truth—my blood-knit love

Long-shown is strong 'gainst the ambitious thought
That I am charged withal. One royal branch

[*Enter Prince James and Attendants.*]

Clipt from the golden tree of monarchy
Leaves yet another in his crescent bloom——

King Robert [*aside*]. He's looking at the boy with eagle
eye——

It is a look of seizure !—O my James,
Come to your father's arms !

Albany. See where he grows
From the old noble trunk. Ambition gives
No slightest motive.

King Robert. 'Tis enough. You're clear.

Albany. That all my love was mocked by the event
Is sore to think on. Who can trammel Death
With cords obedient to mortal will?
My castle hath no dungeon that would hold
Th' invisible last foe. For his offence,
Which God's great judgment-day alone can strike,
I as a man must suffer, while unscathed
Goes the arch-murderer of hope and joy.

King Robert. It is most true. I'm sorry in my heart
That I accused you from an unchecked mouth.
Most true ! Death oft makes innocence seem guilt.
Forgive me, Robert.

Albany. Nay, I have no need.
'Twas natural that you should doubt, suspect,
Where circumstance so darkly pointed out ;
And grief 's a headstrong unenlightened guide.
I knew that reason, toiling through the mists
Of sorrowful opinion and blind wrath,
Would show me white and shine on me again
Whom passion over-clouded. I am blessed
In daylight of your favour. That report
That stirs among the commoners, and sinks
Into base hearts against me, that I starved——

King Robert. God's sake, no more !

Albany. That villainous, black tale
Gains credit from the rumour'd cruelty
To England's second Richard. He whom Death
With still and sudden handling carries home,
Forsooth ! upon the people's oath, is starved.

King Robert. If you will have acquittal, pardon, grace,
Strangle within your throat that awful word,
And never freeze the aching man in me
With such inhuman, foul suggestion.
O God ! that ever such a thing hath been
Cries shame upon Thy fatherhood—unless
Thou leav'st the punishment of children's sin
To devils of the pit. O God ! O God !
The anguish burns me—shrivels up my soul
To whitened ashes and blank lifelessness.

Lindsey. The king is moved.

Albany. Unhappy that I am,
Pleading for pardon, that my tongue should blast
Where it would run to heal. I only spoke
To shut your doors of hearing from the squalor
Of false alarm to your tender love ;
And lo ! I wake the sentries of your soul
To naked panic. Brother, dearest liege,
Have pity on my lips' mistake—forgive !

King Robert. Whereas I feel that none who shares my
blood,
Or of my mother drank the gentle milk,
Could within utmost limits of belief
Descend from man to monster—at this time,
Here in this place, I do acquit thy hand
Of murder pitiless, thy thought of stain
From black, disnatured treason, and thy soul—
Go, take it to the certain eye of God,
Not to the tear-dimmed vision of a man,
Thine earthly king and brother. Nevermore
Speak of this matter,—'tis my earnest pray'r.

Albany. So much of pain it brands upon my thought,

Silence alone can cicatrize the wound.

King Robert. Poor brother—here's my hand !

Albany.

I kiss it, sir.

Lo ! the remission for our liege to sign,
In Latin writ, which clears my innocence
And that of Archibald of Douglas, which
Hath suffered slur with mine.

King Robert.

A pen ! [*signing*] You're free.—

Oh ! with a pen I made *him* prisoner !

Lindsey. What counsel would you take with these your lords ?

You summoned us to conference, my liege.

King Robert. I'd not forgotten. It is near our heart.—

Leave us, my James ; go to our rooms awhile,
Where I can find you presently—my room.— [*Exit James.*
Our words concern our heir and only son.
He is a forward scholar and hath learnt
All that our northern wisdom can impart,
Alas ! but little worth, to Scotland's shame.
Learning is not less golden in a king
Than his own crown ; and manners grace him more,
As he can more display them in his rank,
Than those beneath his sway ; we therefore dream
Of foreign education for our son
In polished France.

Albany [*aside*]. Sooth to my very aim !

My liege, 'tis prudent and well-reasoned.

Lindsey.

Yes.

King Robert. I'm glad it meets your will. The faithful
Earl

Of Orkney will attend our dearest son
With chosen servants. Ere he sail from hence,
We would consult your lordships once again.
Now we would have our privacy.

Albany.

We'll go ;

And ever study to deserve your love.

[*Exeunt Albany and Lords.*

King Robert.

Oh ! it is done !

I've set my little boat upon wide seas
To save it from the jealous flames aboard
That scorch it for destruction. Allan, fetch
The Earl of Orkney hither. [*Exit Allan.*] Kindly knave,
Come tell me, I'm a cruel father? Ay?

Walter. Oh, not so cruel as the circumstance
You'd ward off from your son.

King Robert. How? You are dim.
I wish men spoke their minds with meaning clear.
I'm an old man and my conception slow.

Walter. I meant that many dangers threaten him
Who is sole heir to sovereignty—no more.

King Robert. That was not it.—Good fellow, do you
think

That I shall live to see my son return?

Walter. O sire, you're hale in body.

King Robert. But the heart—
D'you think that it can hold such space of time?

Walter. With patience, yes !

King Robert. With passion — no ! Then there is
memory,

And all this mourning we must add thereto.

[*Enter the Earl of Orkney and Allan.*]

Good earl, 'tis settled that you go with him.

Thank Heaven that you live whom I can trust.

You will be very watchful ; if he die,

I am an old and childless man, an end,

A mortal Omega, a mere life's term,

And ancient monument to Hope's defeat.

Earl of Orkney. My liege, I will protect him, watch and
love

With upright loyalty and perfect care.

Allan. Why do you weep so bitterly, my liege?

King Robert. O Allan, 'tis a very bitter thought
That turns my tears to Marah. O my son !

Allan. 'Twill grieve him sore to part with you.

King Robert.

Of him

I was not thinking. He is true and fair,
But very young, and he will soon forget.
Storms crush the bearded grain ; 'twill never rise.
The tender sprouting blade is dashed, but springs
The better for its grief.—Your arm, kind earl.
There's much to settle, many things to do
Before you start. We'll walk together, earl. *[Exeunt.*

Allan. We'll to his chamber, Walt, and gladden it
With sun and air and cleansing.

Walter. 'Tis high time,
For like a bat's nest hath it been of late.
His absence is our opportunity. *[Exeunt.*

[Re-enter Albany and a Servant.]

Albany. Go, fetch the prior.

Servant. I will, your grace.

Albany. At once.

I'll wait him here. I cannot sleep at night ; *[Exit Servant.*
Dreams enter when I close my eyes, and stalk
Along the silent passages of thought
Like ghosts. My health is touched. This must not be.
Rest is a precious store I cannot spend
On vanities and filmy toys of fear.
This prior shall obtain for me from Rome
A pardon that will lay my haunting crime
With sacred exorcism. Here he comes. *[Enter Prior.*
Hail.

Prior. Benedicite !

Albany. So would I were,
Yet scarcely live I blessed, with dark reports
So cast within the mirrors of my soul
That she is well-nigh blinded to herself,
And takes the dirt that's thrown as native filth
And dregs of her impurity. I scarce
Believe that I am Albany—so vile,
Corroded, monstrous, full of subtle sin,
My enemies declare me. You have heard

That Parliament has clarified my fame,
 The king declared my spotlessness and health.
 You think I have enough restored my soul?
 No ; there's the holy Church I grieved with guilt
 Apparent. I would have her pardon, claim
 Exoneration from the weight of crime
 Which those who freely hate me still would heap
 On my bewildered innocence. I ask
 This right, that she establish me in faith,
 In guiltlessness, and loyalty.

Prior. Your grace,

Why need you pardon where there's no offence?

Albany. To fortify from slander. Those that brag
 Against my newly washed, unsullied name,
 As if it once were black, will lose their tongue
 When they shall find any untoward speck
 Of former misconception, error, fault,
 Which no man, by his nature, can escape,
 Is cleared by holy Church.

Prior. Your grace takes note

Too closely of the swarms that sting your name
 With wounds ephemeral. Such ever fret
 The ease of reputation.

Albany. Pardon me.

I suffer from no pricks, but trenchèd scars.
 The brand of Cain, the infamous red curse,
 Is struck across the brow of my repute.

Prior. 'Twill blush the more if pardoned. To forgive,
 Where sin is absent, fills the emptiness
 With sin's own lurid stain.

Albany. Not so, not so.

It is a measure of state-policy
 To silence evil tongues.

Prior. To teach them words

Of established calumny.

Albany. There you misjudge.

I know men better. Obloquy is dumb

Before the vindication of the Church.
 I'd have you write to Rome this very night,
 And send a speedy messenger.

Prior. Take thought.

If, with a soiled conscience you would steal
 The balm that heals confession into peace,
 Great were your condemnation.

Albany. Priest, you tread
 Too near our honour. Am I not declared
 By the *vox populi*—the voice of God—
 In parliament, and by my peers, unblamed,
 Unblameable?

Prior. You are.

Albany. And by the king
 Acknowledged sinless?

Prior. Yes, you are.

Albany. What more
 Desire you?

Prior. That your lips should firmly seal
 The clean page of denial with the stamp
 And image of your soul.

Albany. You ask for much.
 No Christian dares to say he hath no sin.

Prior. Your peers declared you sinless, so you plead.
 Will you accept the declaration?

Albany. No.

Prior. The declaration for the special sin
 That's laid to your account?

Albany. You pry too far.
 Go, write the letter. I disdain to speak
 The answer to suspicion.

Prior. I will write.
 I know not if His Holiness will grant
 The pardon you desire.

Albany. Nay, urge him to 't,
 As I am rich and great within the land.

Prior. Not so, your grace, as you are innocent ;

A bribe would but unsettle the belief
 That you are pure of murder. The clean hand,
 Unreddened by the stain of blood, as much
 Detests the golden taint of proffered coin.
 Dishonoured is the honour that is bought.

Albany. You wrong me. I but said that as I'm great,
 Pre-eminent in riches, which are snares
 Fate spreads for Envy's watching, it were best
 I should be fortified with clear renown
 And holy recognition. By the death
 Of the king's son, I'm Regent—at the point
 And pinnacle of influence. A slur
 Cast on my faith, looses the bond of trust
 That girdles monarchy ;—rank treason spreads
 Among the scattered members, social craft,
 Domestic infidelity, the guile
 Of business, and the tricks of usury.
 His Holiness will never thus dissolve
 The unity of State, and strike the Church
 With such unsanctified and rude assault
 To manners and religion. Put this down
 Within the letter, using choicer phrase
 Selected by your learning.

Prior. I will write.
 God knows I'd have your grace unsullied.

Albany. Write
 This very eve.

Prior. I will.—Contrition makes
 Appeal far surer than my feeble pen.

Albany. Your pen be strong ! To-morrow I'll to shrift.
 Why do you pause ?

Prior. Acknowledgment is grace.

Albany. Go to !—I'd have you purge disloyalty,
 Pardon foul lips, detraction infamous.
 I would forgive my enemies in thus
 Securing false forgiveness for myself.
 Mac Louis !

[*Enter Servant.*

Show the prior out. Return. [*Exit Servant with Prior.*
 This will establish peace within my breast.
 Oh, may it pacify the corpse of him
 Who cannot sleep at Lindores ! It is said
 That prodigies make eloquent his tomb,
 And call for blood to still the murdered soul
 With slumber of accomplished Nemesis.
 My blood he asks—mine, or my children's blood.
 If not my blood, then theirs ! Not theirs, not theirs !
 Child of my brother, O avenging ghost,
 As thou wert young, ask not my children's blood,
 And cut not off my seed, though such a doom
 Were perfect justice ! I must wait my time ;
 So must they wait. We know not here nor there,
 How, when, requital comes ; but if besought
 Thus from the bed of stone where murder lies,
 Its coming is secure. And yet I think
 These miracles are old wives' tales—no more.
 Guilt blurs my understanding. Twice to-day
 I stumbled,—when I named my crime aloud
 Before the king, and when I offered gold
 For Church's pardon. Twice the cloud hath swept
 My brain's clear weather. But here comes a gleam
 Of goodly sun—that James is bound for France.
 It promises the mid-day of my fame,
 The perfect shining of my dearest hope.
 I'll sleep on it. [*Re-enter Servant.*] To-night I'll have
 strong drink—
 A posset ! Bring it to my sleeping-room. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber. King Robert, Prince James, and
 the Earl of Orkney.*

Earl of Orkney. The convoy waits his highness.

King Robert.

Rather say

That dangers wait him ; harsh, ambitious seas,
 And pulseless rocks and unrelenting winds.

The elements are homeless, unallied ;
They have no bonds, no sanctities. I've watched
All day the West imbrued with sable storm.
I think the breeze is higher.

Earl of Orkney. Nay. I'll swear
Its freshness hath declined.

King Robert. Good ! Then we'll wait
Till all the air is motionless and safe.

Earl of Orkney. Tarry no more, my liege. To slowly
part
Doth make the rift of parting an abyss.

King Robert. O earl, I cannot heave up from my heart
Its anchor with *Farewell* !

Earl of Orkney. Yet must you part.

King Robert. Not yet—not yet ! I cannot loose at once ;
With soft persistence must the minutes work,
Or I shall die.

Prince James. Father !

King Robert. My only child !
Last leaf of my sere bough, when once I loose
Thy bond of dear reliance from my side,
Untraversable space cuts in between,
And I am bare for ever.

Earl of Orkney. Come, my liege,
You speak as journey never had return,
And Providence were nought.

King Robert. A keen rebuke !
God has a human family, and I
Have but one mortal son.—Oh, let me look,
Gaze at your face and see the future in 't.
I shall not watch its changes—never seize
The gracious steps whereby your favours mount
To manhood's comely top. Your brother's face
Was far more delicate, the lips more full
And chafing, and the brow less wide and free,
With less of gentle space between the eyes
As frank as yours. It was a face that drew.

Much love, except when temper blasted it,
 Or scorn envenomed. You are sweetly tuned,
 An even nature ; on your forehead dreams,
 And empire on your mouth. You'll be a man
 Beneficent and royal. Check those sobs.
 If I am dead, my spirit will rejoice.

Prince James. I cannot leave you.

King Robert. Child, nor I loose you.
 And yet I must, if in the barren world
 My flesh would still have aught to call its own.
 Go !—nay, but wait ! You'll think of me at night,
 The games and studies done—think how I lie
 And ponder you. To Memory, as God,
 The darkness and the light are both alike.

Prince James. I'll say "good-night," and leave the
 southern winds
 To give it to the northern.

King Robert. I shall pray,
 And plunge your name into a well of tears
 To send it washed to Heaven.

Prince James. I will kiss
 My hand to you ere sleeping.

King Robert. And you'll love
 The rude land of your birth, nor jest at it ?

Prince James. I've got some heath to carry into France ;
 They say at Paris it is never seen.

King Robert. A bushy lock clipt from your country's
 brow,—
 Join it with this from my white forehead ta'en.
 Be faithful to the twisted memories.

And, James, there is a head as bright as yours
 That's laid beneath the ground. Remember it ;
 James, James, remember how your brother died.

Prince James. I will—when I am king.

King Robert. I know thou wilt.
 The close lips are an oath.

Earl of Orkney. My liege, time runs.

King Robert. The hour-glass of my very fatherhood
Shows all its moments gone. I cannot say
The dire word that bereaves me ; once I signed
A warrant : . . . Earl, no torture man conceives
Could crush this centre down ;—God has a rack
Whereon He breaks some hearts.—I keep you, earl.
My child,
One mighty speechless clasp ! Thus, thus, begot,
Thus lost for ever to my arms' embrace. . . .
Now falls the stroke—now, now !

Prince James. I'll run away.

King Robert. Settle thy chin nor weep. All's over now.
James, send me all the verses that you write ;
Your masters' names and how you spend each day ;
And who is kind and if the land is fair.

[*Exit Prince James, hiding his face.*]

He's gone ! Good earl, go after ! Shut the door.

[*Exit the Earl of Orkney.*]

Starved, starved ! Starvation ! David, David ! Son !
It's in my heart the hunger and the want,
And from the lenten depths of my own soul
I pity thee. And—oh !—to think of it !
His vivid youth and golden beauty gone
To the unloved Obscure, the comfortless
Environment of Night. I know they think
That I forget him ; for his memory
That like a grave-stone stood against my heart
Hath sunk into its substance, and now seems
To careless eyes half lost ; but so much more
'Tis hidden in my love's dark sepulchre.
He gave his lusty years to wantonness
And shameful riot. All my being's hope
I'd give for his deliverance. And yet
I did not train him with strict uprightness ;
I gave my precepts with a fearful voice,
O'erlook'd his irreligion, made excuse
For spotted innocence and growing guilt.

He died in soul. My brother married him
 With gross dishonour—so he died in heart.
 I left his punishment in other hands ;
 And then he died in body ; triple death,
 Three-fold starvation ! I am judged. Ah me !
 And yet I send my sole surviving child
 To a licentious court, that I may shun
 His arduous protection. God is just.
 I who have loosed all duties from my neck,
 Shall sometime feel the stone of Sisyphus
 Rolled on to me for carriage. Yet—O God !—
 The stranger's care alone could save my child. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*The same. A Hall. Enter Albany.*

Albany. My son and grandsons in a vision bowed
 Their heads before me, and my phantom-hand
 Let fall the hungry steel upon their necks.
 My sin, my sin was executioner,
 For I myself was dead as midnight ghost.—
 All this is fever ; yet within the lines
 Of sane and irreproachable surmise
 My fear attains to danger ; for my son
 Is feeble, indolent,—a man of peace,
 Unworthy of my loins ; he'll lose my gain,
 Drop what I've damned my soul to lay on him.
 Then is there James. . . . Would he might share
 His brother's grave ! A like captivity
 Shall wither him——

[Enter an Attendant.]

Attendant. Your grace, Sir John is dead.

Albany. Ramorgny ? He hath lived
 A white and staring life these many days.
 How ended it ?

Attendant. He hung against the wall
 Within a dusty corner.

Albany. Self-undone.
 'Twas melancholia !—Attend my charge

Go : bear this letter to the English king.—
Here is a purse.—Rest not, until you lay
Its sealèd sheet within his royal hand.

Attendant. My bounteous lord, this opportunity
To do you service——

Albany. Speak not ; but begone. [*Exit Attendant.*
O Opportunity !—

My soul, self-murdered, rots beneath the stake
That pointed her direction. Now again
She glimmers on the crooked, deep-cut way
Of treachery, and I will follow her.
She is the fleeting guide that draws my life
Through all its paths of darkness ; she's the star
That leads ambition forth ! My letter greets
The King of England, tells him how the seas
Are bringing James to France, sets down the points
Where he will touch on English ground, and when.
The lure will take ; my last impediment
Find, like my first, a prison. I am blessed.
Would that the pardon came, and that I felt
Less sick at banquets, and saw less of dreams. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*The Castle of Rothesay in Bute. A Chamber.*
King Robert, the Duchess Marjorie, Allan.

Duchess Marjorie. Now that my infamous, false bond is
loosed,
And death has cleared my wrong, with sweetened thought
I tend and love my monarch's broken age.
My pride no longer fills my care with gall
As when his son was living.—Let me put
Your cushion smooth and easy for the head.—
Good Allan, help me.

Allan. Blank—no gratitude.
His agèd sight is travelling across
The limit whence his life will follow it.
He listens to our human speech no more

Than if his ears were closed. He cannot last
More than to learn his son is safe in France.

King Robert. Ha ! France !

Allan. Yes, sire—Prince James is surely safe.
The wind hath favour'd sailing.

Duchess Marjorie. Let me raise
Your feet, my father, on this other stool.

Allan. He's gone again.

Duchess Marjorie. A lost, a feeble face
That makes no terms with Death.

Allan. Lady, I'm glad
That I have had no children. It is sore
To lose them—see them die like upward sparks,
And your own embers burning still to ash.

Duchess Marjorie. Yes—and to see them sin and sell
their souls
To vanity. I'll never give the world
More lives to waste.

Allan. An' yet to have no love !
I loved your husband ; I had been forlorn
Without his kindly laugh.

Duchess Marjorie. Enough ! He died
In time to save his kindness from all taint,
But nothing else.

King Robert. Look ! Does the weather-cock
Still point to south ?

Allan. Yes, and the day is fair
And full of shining.

King Robert. Help me to look out.

Duchess Marjorie. You are too weak to move.

King Robert. I must look out.

Support me to the window.—Over there
Is France, the sunny land, beyond those fields
Of wheaten green, beyond, beyond, beyond !
And where's the east ?

Allan. 'Tis yonder.

King Robert. Over there

Is dark Lindores, beyond the blasted moors
That make the distance mourn—beyond, beyond !
Both unattainable ! O heart, too far !—
Now I'll sit down.—Why runs that man so fast ?

Allan. Perchance he brings us happy tidings, sire,
That the young prince is well.

King Robert [*struggling to speak*]. My tongue hath
swooned

At presage of his tidings. Haste—O stay—
Not more . . . I should be stronger tasting death
To bear it. . . .

Allan. Nay, 'tis surely happy news.
Our gallant prince in health and full of joy.
Look ! they are come. What ho ! Prince James is safe !

[*Enter the Earl of Buchan and Walter.*]

Earl of Buchan. He's in an English prison—in the
Tow'r

That frowns upon the Thames. King Henry hath,
Against the laws of knighthood, seized the ship
That bore our prince, and vows he'll teach the tongue
Of France to Scotland's heir.

King Robert. He's dead.

Walter. No, no :

In prison, and a kindly one they say.

King Robert. He's dead—he's dead ! They told me
such false tales ;

David was but in prison, in kind walls—
And he was *dead*. I'm near the grave for lies
To much avail you.

Earl of Buchan. No ; he is not dead.
He's well and treated in most gracious ways.

King Robert. Starved ?

Earl of Buchan. He is well attended and well kept,
Even from the royal board.

King Robert. Away, begone !
I'm dying, and you thrust the earth on me.
I'm on my way to judgment. Let me face

No witnesses ;—no bleeding chiefs that slew
 Each other, I consenting ; no poor souls
 I've left to evil men ; no innocents
 Condemned by wicked judges I have feared
 To thwart ; no beggars, stripped by greedy lords
 Whose avarice I bore ; no murdered forms
 Whose murd'ers I forgave. No need of such.
 I plead that I am guilty.—Bring them not.
 I'm guilty on my solemn oath, O God.
 Father of men, King of the universe,
 I've sinned in Thy great offices—in both !
 Bring not Thy witnesses—my people's ghosts.
 Bring not that dear dread witness, with pale hands
 And different keen face and eyes, whose look
 Would fix a root of horror in my soul
 To grow up like a yew-tree from a grave.
 Let me be judged within an empty court !
 Or, if we're judged together,—when the book
 Is opened, where in lines of red are writ
 The sins of his few years,—
 And he stands far apart in white despair,
 Then shall he answer to a few that fall
 From the accusing lips, but point the sum
 To me for answer. I will take them all
 As blessings :—for a father's sins extend
 Far over his own blotted page ; yea, fill
 With scarlet of damnation many blanks
 His children had left clean except for him.

Allan. How solemn is this judgment before death,
 Enacted for our profit.

Walter. Thus to see
 A soul in flesh corruptible appear
 Before th' immortal bar.

King Robert. My God, my God !
 I wait Thy sentence ; I am self-condemned,
 Without a word from any human voice.
 It will not be to flames ! Some writers say

The punishments of hell are nothing more
 Than change of states—each man his opposite.
 If so, then I shall be a childless slave,
 My fatherhood and royalty displaced,
 Seen in some other, who within my sight
 Leans his one hand upon a goodly son,
 The other on a sceptre. Then, oh then,
 The penal fires would be like Heaven's glow,
 Their smoke refreshing cloud and covering
 From the heart-scorching sight.

Allan. Will none approach
 To hold him up?

Duchess Marjorie. I will.—His eyes are wild
 With something in the depths.

King Robert. Lost ! lost ! 'Tis done.
 There is no crown upon my head. Oh say,
 Is nothing on my head?

Duchess Marjorie. A little round
 Of sovereign gold.

King Robert. But I can feel there's naught ;
 And in me all my father's love is sucked
 Forth by the cruel wind.—What face is that ?
 I never knew it. Yet the hair—the hair !
 But oh ! the eyes—I've never looked on such,
 Nor known those lips. If it should be my son,
 I do disown him, disinherit, curse !
 Now Hell receive me !

Duchess Marjorie. See, the change hath come,
 Death's ashen tread, before it stoops to take.

Allan. Gather about him now the strife is done.
 Peace presses us together.

King Robert [*in a whisper*]. Prison ! Death !
 The cloud of night is rising in mine eyes ;
 I feel Life turn the key upon my heart.
 There is no op'ning.—It is dark—I die.

[*Dies.*]

Duchess Marjorie. That was the last heave of the broken
 heart,

The last breath of the soul.

Allan. My king, my lord !
I never thought thy death would be so strange,
With all that pain to end a gentle life.

[*Enter Albany.*]

Duchess Marjorie. Your grace, the king is dead.

Albany. How !—dead !—the king !

Duchess Marjorie. He died upon the news that James is
ta'en

The King of England's captive.

Earl of Buchan. Now your grace
Is Regent, till the prisoner is loosed,
Whose chains bind down our restive fealty
And tie it to your will.

Albany. A trust I hold
But for the regal future. Lift the head !
Died he at peace ?

Walter. Oh no, he mourn'd his son
Till we could hear no more.

Albany. Alas ! and this
Is rule and monarchy—to be like this,
Poor, old, unhappy, ignorant, extinct.—
[*Aside.*] For this I've doom'd my soul. What's done is done.
I'll use my fortune till I'm even thus.—
He had few sins to dread.

Duchess Marjorie. And yet he died
Most full of hellish terrors.

Albany. I will send
A great procession. John, I mourn thy fate.
False was the comfort that new-nam'd thy state. [*Exit.*]

Duchess Marjorie. I'll to a convent's refuge, there to pray
For his affrighted soul, and sooth to say
For his sake will I join another name
To his and never think they're not the same. [*Exit.*]

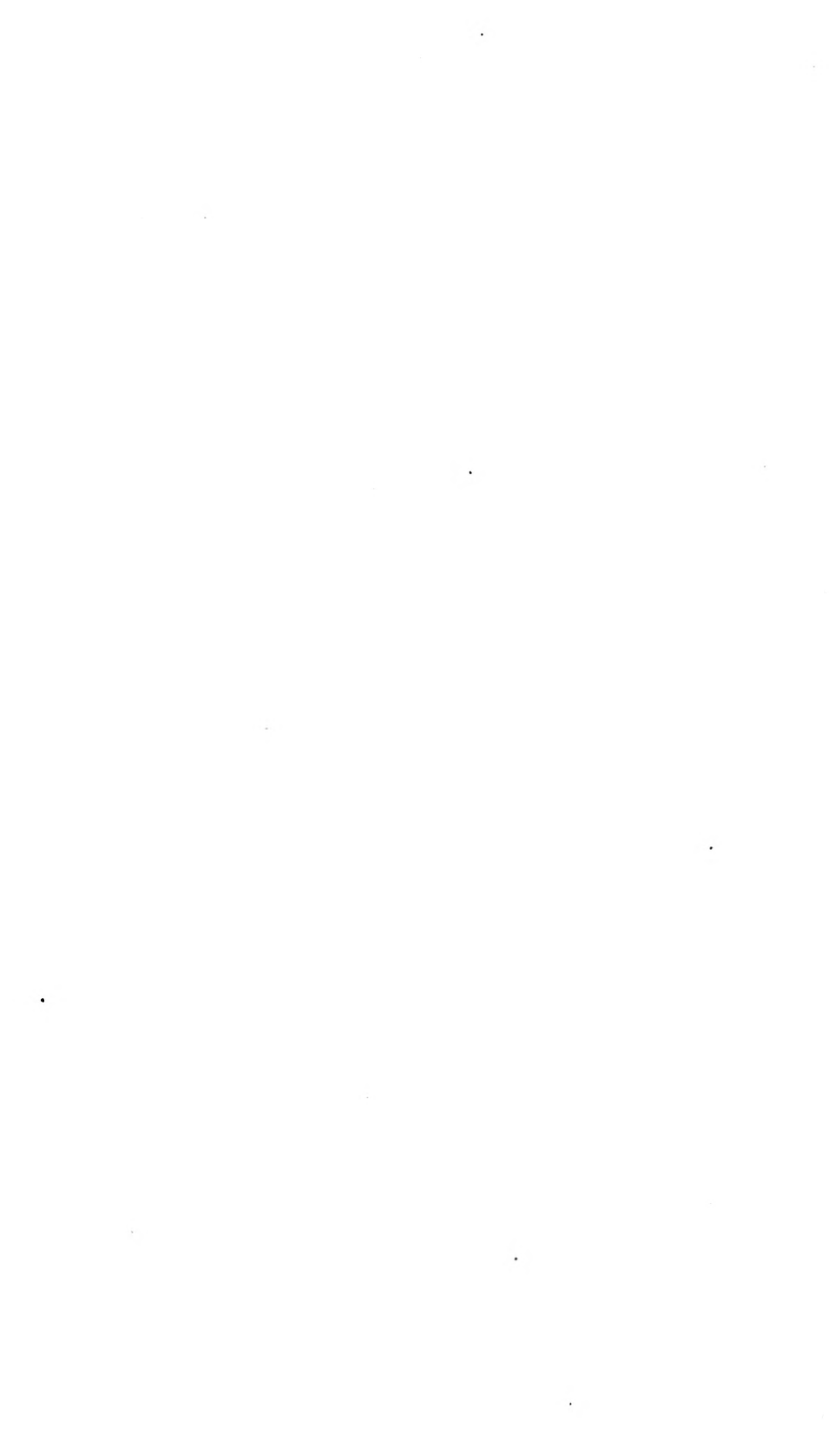
Allan. His heart was broken, not by strokes of Time,
But thrusts of him who should have propp'd it. Crime

Such as dark Albany's is visited
On the third generation. Raise the dead.

[Enter procession of Churchmen and Lords.]

His doom was in his gentleness and fear.
His changèd name still brought him to this bier.

[Exeunt omnes.]



WILLIAM RUFUS.

Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχῇ τῇδε πρεσβεύω θεῶν
τὴν πρωτόμαντιν Γαίαν·

Eumenides.

PREFACE.

A VISIT to the New Forest suggested this drama.

On a plot of scanty grass, with few trees about, and one small leafy oak almost touching it, stands a low, triangular, iron-cased stone, which is said to mark the place where the king fell. It is dark, stern, unobtrusive as Fate ; it stands like a mile-stone on the way of Retribution. Here the tree grew from which the arrow glanced as if directed by Nature's anger at the destruction of her food-bearing fields for the insolence of pleasure. Now there are no great trees near, no forest gloom ; it is all soft and healed—scarcely the scar of association lingers. Only the poet, looking on that black memorial in the midst of the "calm oblivious tendencies and silent over-growings" of Nature, can realize its import and history.

In the matter of accuracy this play is not to be regarded as a study of the Past. While the author has felt the sacredness of touching dead character, of which he has striven to bear witness that would not make him ashamed should he hereafter be brought face to face with the personages whose moods and thoughts he has sought to penetrate and reproduce, he has not scrupled to modify or compress events at his pleasure, holding that the dramatist, in face of chrono-

logy, may declare, with the imperiousness of Petruccio, "It shall be what o'clock I say it is."

Again, the playwright is always the contemporary of the age he treats. He moves among living figures in whom he feels an interest too vital to be curious of their accent or demeanour.

The material he needs is faithful narrative that by its simplicity becomes pictorial. Such help the author has found in Mr. Freeman's *William Rufus*. Regret that he may through ignorance have misused, or through covetousness too rashly appropriated the historical treasure of these volumes, cannot restrain him from acknowledging, with humility and delight, the debt he owes to their most inspiring pages.

March 6th, 1885.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

WILLIAM RUFUS, *King of England.*

THE ÆTHELING HENRY, *brother to Rufus.*

ANSELM, *Abbot of Bec—afterward Archbishop of Canterbury.*

RANDOLF FLAMBARD, *Chancellor and Justiciar.*

WILLIAM OF ST. CALAIS, *Bishop of Durham.*

WALKELIN, *Bishop of Winchester.*

GUNDULF, *Bishop of Rochester.*

JOHN DE VILLULA, *Bishop of Bath.*

WALTER OF ALBANO, *Papal Legate.*

WALTER TIREL,

ROBERT FITZ-HAMON,

GILBERT OF LAIGLE,

WILLIAM OF BRETEUIL,

ROBERT OF MEULAN,

GILBERT OF CLARE,

EADMER or EDMER,

BALDWIN OF TOURNAY,

GODRIC, *Dean of Twynham.*

PURKIS, *a charcoal-burner.*

BEOWULF, *father to Purkis.*

HAROLD,

LEOFRIC,

WILFRITH,

AN OLD MAN.

} *Norman nobles.*

} *faithful disciples to Anselm.*

Bishops, servants, peasants, citizens, etc.

SCENE :—*The New Forest and Winchester—removed during the action to Gloucester and Hastings.*

WILLIAM RUFUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The New Forest: by a charcoal-fire. Beowulf and Wilfrith. Leofric in the distance.*

Beowulf. They turn our bread-lands to a pleasant ground.
Nature will never bear it : the fierce earth
Will rend the foreign, sacrilegious hands
As a great mastiff, humble to his lord,
Is fatal to the fondling wayfarer.
Where now I sit there was a sound of bells,
The sight of curling smoke from cotters' roofs ;
I feel the undergrowth above my chin
Where there was browsing common. All the wood
Is savage, rank, o'ergrown, pestiferous,
Depopulate of man, and teeming with
The rampant, wild, unprofitable beasts
That forage on him. Ah, there is a sound,
A merry, merry horn, a laughing cry ;
Let's wait.

Wilfrith. Grandfather, you should trust in God.

Beowulf. It's the earth I'm trusting to, I've planted it ;
It feels the tie of blood down to the pith ;
It will not fail.

Wilfrith. But Bishop Wulstan says
That we should love our neighbours.

Beowulf. So I do ;
 I love them so, I'd sniff about their graves
 If they were here. How can we love the dead
 That drop forgotten, and just rot in soul
 And body, cut away from burial
 And peace-endowing prayer ? We must avenge.

Wilfrith. We are so helpless.

Beowulf. You have eyes and youth.
 Age in despair is weaker than a child ;
 Its weather-beaten hope is mightier
 Than any fitful ferment of the blood.
 From the first moment of the rimless dark
 In which I wake, slumber, and feel the sun,
 A hope struck root, I felt it in the soil
 Of my blocked brain, where thought went burrowing—
 A tedious mole—and sense writhed underground.
 The fibres of this hope took hold of me,
 Pierced, ramified my subterranean life ;
 Now it has heaved out to the upper light
 And spreads I know not whither.—I am blind.

Wilfrith [aside]. He frightens me : it's like one in the
 grave
 Who can lie quiet till the judgment-day,
 Brooding his wrongs. [*Aloud.*] But must we not forgive ?
 The Conqueror
 Left our king Harold's body on the beach
 In his great battle-fury. Afterward
 He buried it at Waltham, penitent.

Beowulf. We must submit, be penitent, forgive !—
 But that's to change your mind ; I never thought
 That God changed His.—I thought within myself
 The seasons were not surer than the Lord,
 You might depend on Him. It's altered now ;
 He's God of Battle Abbey ; . . . on the beach
 He let them huddle up King Harold's bones,
 He's strewn our prayers as ashes to the wind,
 Suffered such resurrection of men's bones

As modest Death cries shame of.—He repents,
 His past is not prophetic of to-day ;
 But at the breaking-places of the wave
 All keepeth constant to its habitude ;
 There is no change of custom in the air ;
 Yon oak drops acorns ; I am comforted.
 The earth is English still ; the soil gives suck ;
 It will not rear strange children.

What's that noise ?

I hear a whistling and the splint of wood.
 Art sharpening arrows ?

Leofric. Why, they have an aim.

I'm carving, grand-dad, could you only see ;—
 Here is that leering abbeſs to the life.
 Oh, I'll shoot from the gargoyles and not miss.
 I'm moulding ſuch a lot of funny curves
 About the mouth—not wrinkles—it's more ſoft. . . .
 The change is gradual as youth to age.
 Look, Wilfrith ! . . . here's a ſoul forgets itſelf,
 Popping an eager face from out the cowl,
 A blaze of curioſity. Can gueſs ?

Wilfrith. Not Uncle Godric. It's the curious dean
 That frightened Twynham's canons ere his rule,
 And longed to build. Why ſhould you mimic him ?
 He gave you learning.

Leofric. Bless your mother-wit !

Mock him, you numbskull ! 'Tis the very life.
 It's clear that he got thwarted yeſterday
 By the drawn brows : clear too he'll overcome,
 By this huge, dominant, aggressive chin.
 I've caught the very moulding of his ſmile ;
 Smiles have ſo many ſhapes.

Beowulf. Where's Harold, lads ?

Leofric [aſide]. Ah me, it's bitter ſeeing with the voice.
 The half-blank, blundering viſage overgrown
 With ſorrow, all the faculties ſhrunk down
 To pollard, and a fevered ignorance

Writhing the sightless gaze. If I might notch
Those wrinkles——

[*Carves.*

Wilfrith [*to Beowulf*]. Harold will be here anon,
Dear grandfather. [*To Leofric.*] You have no shame at all
To hew a blind man's face from out that block.—

[*Enter Harold, followed by Purkis.*]

He's here, and looking sullen. Who's behind?
Why, father!

Purkis. By your looks you have not seen
What's lying underneath the splintered fir.
Now, grand-dad, clap a great fist to your ear
And take the news. . . . A Norman's dead,
I found him lying stiff down in the glade;
And it's a prince, his cloak all broidered o'er
Thick as the May-buds, and that blasted red
Streaking his golden hair.

Leofric. Where does he lie?

Purkis. Up higher half a mile. Don't start, ye fools;
No meddling with him. One might feel him o'er
As if he were a dog; when we are dead
We are all peasants, churl and prince alike,
Except they carry us to Winchester.
And yet I dare not touch him for my eyes.
[*Old dad, they gouged yours out; I had to keep
You grumbling through a night of twenty year.*]
We must not smell about a fallen stag;
Just let him wither like an autumn leaf.
I think he died by nature, sort of struck.
[*To Beowulf.*] Ay, chuckle, grand-dad, there's an eye in
Heaven

Peering at loophole, though our chinks be bunged.
[*To himself.*] He finds a sort of comfort in it like,
To feel there's some one scanning; for my part
This staring at misfortune in the way
It pleases Providence to practise,—well,
It's like the cattle; they'll stare by the hour—
They never move: the watching simply galls,

If there's no heave of rescue in the eye.
 But all the same I'm pleased this happens pat
 To cheer the old man up. [*Aloud.*] A pretty lad,
 We think it's young Prince Richard.

Harold. Half a child,
 And, curse him, such an innocent young face,—
 Out ravaging ; he could not understand.

Wilfrith. Should we not bury him ?

Beowulf. Are there no beasts
 To feed on him, no rain, nor loosening wind
 To help him to mortality ? Forbear !
 We may not touch the quarry.

Leofric. I must go
 See him myself.

Purkis. You have a cunning eye
 That copies like smooth water ; go your ways,
 It's early yet ; but come back stealthily. [*Exit Leofric.*
 [*To Harold.*] Harold, you're in the sulks.

Harold. He looked so helpless and so innocent
 I could not hate him. Could we rise in hordes
 And storm their castles ; but to cut one off——

Beowulf. Is it the work of any native hand ?

Harold. No ; there are hundreds who would gladly do 't
 For lack of something nobler.

Purkis. Bide your time.
 Come, you are gossiping like wenches ; work.
 I soon shall have to keep you, dad, and all.
 Three sturdy lads, these faggots still to stack,
 And that old waster trunk to hew away.
 Come, Harold ! I find Wilfrith on his knees,
 Praying our Lady with his tools before ;
 And Leofric gets out a curious knife
 And peels the bark ;—not one can deal a blow.

Harold. Firewood to warm mere slaves, to be put out
 At curfew-bidding. Oh the weariness !
 There is no choice 'twixt murder and the tools ;
 No soldier's part, no fearless happy death,

No hope of honourable home and love.
 I have seen trees cut down for building ships,
 The bonnie waving branches overhead
 Straightened to twigless timber. Father, if
 I could so perish for the land's defence,
 All wantonness of youth I'd put away,
 All sap of pleasure, all sky-peering pride,
 To be a seasoned keel, an implement,
 A common plank for Freedom's foot to tread ;
 I will not see my manhood's goodly powers
 Rated with monkish imbecility.
 Wilfrith may saw the wood and say his prayers,
 I'll do some mischief, and so earn my death.

[*Exit.*]

Purkis [*looking after him*]. The devil, ah !
 Ne'er misdirected to a gallows. If
 The boy will turn from wholesome work and prayer
 And live on curses, I shall find him caught
 Like Absalom up yonder in the bough.
 My son, my son !—I laugh when my heart aches ;
 Like stretching out a weary stiffened leg,
 The change of posture brings a little ease.

Wilfrith. Father, hear !
 Let me set out for Twynham, tell the tale
 Of the young prince's death ; these holy men
 Will bring a litter, bear the corpse away,
 And no suspicion.

Purkis. Make an end of it,
 A decent end ; I do not grudge the child
 Some pretty burial chaunting and a mass.
 Keep God in thought ; He's haply hereabout.
 Grand-dad, I'll leave you by the charcoal-fire
 To watch ; there's nothing else that you can do.

Beowulf. Nothing at all ; I'm best here by the fire
 Hid in the turf, the oven where the wood
 Is packed, and all is changed by patience.
 There's nothing else to do.

Purkis [*looking back at his father*]. Sometimes he'll sit

Seven days and nights in the thick oozing smoke,
 Noiseless as clay, and on his countenance
 A fiery revolution. Nothing comes
 Peaceful across ; his passions harry him,
 And from their ravaged homestead in his eyes
 Flee to make murderous havoc on the brow.
 He'll not recover ; like the Yorkshire wolds
 He's scarred effectually,—no hope of corn
 On the once pleasant uplands of his face.
 All's bleak and desert. . . . Poor old rambling dad,
 They think he is a prophet ! [Exit.]

SCENE II.—*Twynham.* The Priory Court. Enter Godric, Canons, and Wilfrith.*

Godric. Alas, Prince Richard lies beneath the trees,
 His May o'erlaid with death's untimely snow.
 Much will Duke Robert mourn his lusty son,—
 The second Richard whom the hunt hath slain.
 So learn we how sin works the vengeance
 That's properly its curse. A father spread
 A net of tangled boughs to hold the deer
 He loved as they were children of his bone ;
 Therein his royal issue is entailed,
 Slain with the arbalest. Woe dogs the pride
 That took the people's earth in lust of sport,
 And banished God from the deep forest-glades.

1st Canon. An awful deed to burn each holy church !

2nd Canon. But shall this child receive no sepulchre
 Because his fathers sinned ?

Godric [to Canons]. Go, get a bier,
 And Wilfrith shall be guide to where he lies.
 He took not up with conscious blasphemy
 His race's wickedness. To Winchester
 He shall be gently borne. [Exeunt Canons.] Wilfrith, your
 heart

* Christchurch.

Hath some petition. Speak it openly.

Wilfrith. I found you fishing in the shallow streams
That spread a purity about these meads,
And glass the sky which you have vowed to serve.
Your lips were moving happily : methought
You lay in shelter of a lovely peace
I sigh to enter. Here the weight of life
Is taken from the shoulders of the world.—
Oh, might I join your dedicated band,
And share their simple days 'mid lowly scenes
Beyond the forest's hateful witchery.

Godric. My son, your heart hath heard the heavenly call ;
Be patient. You are bidden and will come
Soon as the time is ripe.

Wilfrith. I'd live and die
At this sweet place, in your sweet company.

Godric. In God's good time ! [*Re-enter Canons.*] There
come the brothers back.

1st Canon. All is prepared.

Godric [*to Canons*]. Go, four of you, to lift
With song and supplication the fair prince
To mistimed funeral. My blessing !

Wilfrith. Give
To me peculiar benison. I go
To living death in yon accursed bounds.

Godric. Hope and religion purify your heart,
And keep it ready ! Benedicite. [*Exeunt.*]
I'll work that he may join our humble Church.
But who comes here ?

[*Enter more Canons.*]

3rd Canon. O father ! woe is me !
That man of wrath, that spoiler of the Church,
That dark blasphemer with the fiery name,
Flambard, is at our gates.

Godric. Now Heaven help !
He means the house no good.

[*Enter other Canons.*]

4th Canon.

Alas, sweet Dean !

He enters with a proud and dancing eye,
That inventories all it looks upon,
And smirches all it sees.

5th Canon.

Each door and chink

Draws his observance, and he marks each man
As he would buy him into slavery.
His mouth commands as doth a trumpet-blare,
By clamour brazen-voiced ; his ruddy face
Burns like a beacon prophesying strife ;
His stubborn form is irresistible ;
The weak air flies before it. . . .

4th Canon.

A low churl,

A hag-begotten priest.

5th Canon.

We'll never bow

And cringe beneath his trampling insolence.

4th Canon. Never !

Godric.

God give me strength and soldiership!

4th Canon. Listen! His voice along the corridor

Crashes the covered silence.

Flambard [within].

Where's this dean,

This Godric?

[*Enters with other Canons.*]

Godric.

Here.

Flambard.

I come to claim my own.

Godric. Then no man who is just may hinder you.

Flambard. Sense in a churchman! Wonderful! The king

Hath granted me the church and convent.

5th Canon.

Lord !

Flambard. Ay, so I am thy lord, thou tonsured fool.

The church is mine ; the priory too is mine,
And mine, ye shivering souls, the revenue.

'Tis all at my disposal, and I will

To build me a new church of richer stones,

And ampler stretch from sacred East to West,

With higher roof and more exalted tow'r.

I'll fire it like a fox from every hole
Of eye and mouth. Sir Dean, you shall not eat
My bread till you are humbler.

Godric. Never fear !

Your meat I will not taste.

1st Canon. Alas, he raves ;

We cannot face the desert.

2nd Canon. We must yield

With sad submission.

Flambard. Will ye ?

All. Yes, alas !

Flambard. Then certain moneys shall ye put apart
To keep you, and all fasts shall be observed.
The rest of your good treasure I shall hold
For sake of the new church that I shall build
To cover you with beauty. Well, Sir Dean,
Will you not rule the dinner I provide
For modest stomachs ?

Godric. No, I'll never touch
Hell-offered bounty : rather will I go
To yon wide shades, where corn and apple-tree
Are exiles, and the beasts have treasured limbs
'Tis death to roast.

Flambard. The king would blast your sight
For such a speech ! You, canons, I forbid
To seek to turn him from his foolishness.
My wrath will burst its sides if longer kept
In fume. We'll drink. Draw forth your choicest wines
And parchments of the priory, the key
Of every store and coffer. While I feed
I'll cast the sums up. Then I'll say adieu,
And pass the gates, and shut them, dean, on you. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Malwood Lodge, in the New Forest. Enter Walter Tirel, William of Breteuil, and Robert Fitz-hamon.*

Tirel. 'Tis strange he loves the forest with a lust
The green leaves wake to madness ; yet its shade
Hath been a brother's hearse, a nephew's doom :
Fate spins beneath its beeches.

Breteuil. True, the king
Pants with ungoverned joy within its ways.
He loves to scent the honeyed, sylvan air,
To break the greenwood holly with a cry
That peals above the comely-headed trees,
And pierces the remote and quiet deer
Before the dart is through them.

Fitz-hamon. 'Tis a weald
For royal pleasure.

Tirel. Doubtless ; yet methinks
About the silver trunks and mossied paths
There is a noiseless awe, an influence
That passes to the heart and sits within
Unasked, unwelcome, irremovable.

Fitz-hamon. Our Tirel is besprited in the glades.
'Tis said they swarm with magic shapes and sounds
That make the Saxon chatter with dismay
And superstition.

Tirel. Well, our Norman woods
Are sunnier and sparser and more soft
In entertainment to the traveller
Than this gigantic forest. I am strange
To such dense multitude of vaulted boughs
As keep the healthy sun from entering.

Breteuil. We hunt to-day. To-morrow we take horse
For distant Gloucester where the Council meets.
God grant we get a primate ; for the king
Still holds the sainted visitor from Bec,

Sweet-featured Anselm, prisoned in the land,
And will not let him sail.

Tirel.

'Tis strange, most strange ;

The king is unmoved in his blasphemy
And pride against the Church, and yet he keeps
Its brightest jewel by him.

Fitz-hamon.

Hark ! the horn,

The press of dogs, the steed's uneasy pace,
The burly prickers and the merry knaves !

[*They enter singing.*]

SONG.

To the forest, ho !
Where the tall deer run,
We'll go, we'll go,
And every one
Shall bend his duteous bow.

To the forest, heigh !
Where the green oaks stand,
We'll ride away,
A jolly band,
With, ho ! for a greenwood day !

[*Enter the King with boisterous following.*]

Rufus. Here I breathe free ; here am I over-lord
Of man and wold ; here the subservient soil
I privilege, or starve to barrenness,
As my caprice resolves. I punish here.
Ha, ha ! Here am I absolute. I roar
A lion through the woods, and fugitive
Slinks the unmanèd and offenceless herd ;
Or scans me with a trembling constancy,
Too much appalled for flight. My will is law,
Fair Forest-Law,—that is my perfect will.
It dooms the poacher to the swinging bough,
The hound to cringing service, and the deer
To the large liberty of wide confine.
I'm generous here to my brute prisoners,
Yielding them charters with a liberal hand,—

Its bristling leaves compact, well to the fore ;
 Behind, the rampart's azure secrecy.
 Well, Wilfrith, are you satisfied ?

Wilfrith.

If now

I might go in hot from my work and pray.
 O brother, tell my father of my need.
 I'm bidden to the cloister. What is wrong
 Is in our souls ; we suffer for our sins,
 And must afflict ourselves.

Leofric.

Oh, do not think

We travel so untreasured in resource
 We needs must earn the bread of every joy
 By sweat of soul. If life 's a desert—ah !
 There's manna in the waste ; it lies about,
 And the wise idle soul is satisfied.—
 What is't ? An adder curled upon the bough ?
 You stare and shake.

[*A spectre passes.*]

Wilfrith.

Brother, you saw it pass . . . ?

A mist with bony outlines . . . and an eye
 Cross'd by a bloody streak.

Leofric.

Such often glide

About the coloured stems or twist around
 The blank tree-shapes of midnight.

Wilfrith.

Oh, we live

Within accursèd bounds ; the insolence
 Of pleasure hath unsanctified the Church,
 Unbuilt the home, ungirdled field from field,
 And made this tract an uncouth wilderness
 Where demons jeer and sooty spectres hunt
 With flamy-visaged hounds. I must escape ;
 The very air is sinful.

Leofric.

In God's time

I'll range the dirty faces of these ghosts
 About His tow'r, that men may see their foes
 And know them. So I'll turn to righteousness
 What poisons you. There's one that's half a cat,
 With human eyes and howling fringe of teeth

About its monstrous yawn ; one, rough and plump
 As knarl upon an oak, is animate
 With jollity ; one hangs his fiendish jaw
 Demure and lustful ; one through chink of lid
 Gloats on the holy sky. I've learnt them all,
 And men shall see them in eternal stone,
 And fear and watch.—Here wend no sprites of Hell,
 Our uncle and our father.

[*Enter Purkis and Godric.*]

Wilfrith. Grave and slow.

Godric. My sons, my sons, the very Church herself
 Gives but uncertain shelter. I am cast
 Forth from my house of Twynham, sent to find
 A strange asylum for my agèd grief.

Wilfrith. Never !

Godric. Alas ! 'tis wicked Flambard's will,
 That torch of God that brands on us our sins
 With flaming judgment.

Wilfrith. How my heart is sore !
 There was sure healing in the holy place
 You kept in righteousness across the bounds
 Of this sin-blighted purlieu.

Godric. Comfort lies
 A placid child on every sorrow's breast ;
 It wakes to laugh us into hope again.
 All will be well with me. I have no fear.
 The homeless in their land are ever watched
 By ministers of Grace. Take heart, my son.
 At my entreaty, as my parting charge,
 The new dean will receive you to the peace
 And blessedness of holy brotherhood.

Purkis. Ay, Wilfrith, never quake and hang your head.
 For shame ! Become the monk, lad, like a man.

Wilfrith. I am unworthy. . . .

Purkis. Pooh, it was thy wish.
 There's no brave muscle in that puny thought
 That makes a man unworthy of his aim.

Wilfrith. I cannot speak : good uncle, come to me ;—
The ruined chapel—there I will give thanks. [*Exit.*]

Godric. They think my church is mean ; they have proud
souls

That will not stoop in pray'r nor rise in chant
Save under mighty column and jagged arch.

Leofric. The church to be re-built ?

Godric. And you are named
To work its stones to shape of beast and plant,
To twist the column, to endue the wall
With dragon's flinty scales.

Leofric. I will transplant
The forest and its phantoms to the church.
I'll make our ivy's locked and solid stems
Grip and o'erspread the pillar.

[*Enter Harold and Beowulf from another part of the forest.*]

Purkis. Grand-dad comes,
Half-fog, half-thundercloud his poor blurred face.
Why, Harold, you are hot.

Harold. There's feast to-day
At Minstead ; the good buck that Malf may carve
Once in the year is served. Heav'n choke the churl !
Purkis. He ever loved good dishes. Have you heard
Flambard is lord of Twynham ?

Leofric. And the church
To be re-built.

Godric. The canons dispossessed
Of the revenue.

Beowulf. There they christened me—
In the old church of Twynham. It's washed out.

Harold. Grandfather, do not mind your christening.
Edwin and Aldric both are dead
For shooting at a stag, like Malf, who now
Is chewing at his savoury haunch unhurt.
I loved them. Oh, the sweet, big, comely boys !
Such giants they were growing.

Godric. Let us go

And learn if we may bury them.

Purkis.

Kind soul !

[*Exeunt Godric, Purkis, and Leofric.*

Beowulf. The air has been a-milking ; it smells sweet
As a lass fresh from the udders. The young trees
Shoot up ; the king grows over-fond of it,
The fatal mazy place, Prince Richard's grave.
Ay, there's a noise of tears. What, Harold, lad !
[*Feeling him.*] His sturdy hair.

Harold.

I'll take to woman's work.

To be a man has no significance.

Beowulf. Eh ! But there's change of weather in your
voice.

Who suffers ? Are they mutilated ?

Harold.

What !

You have been deaf and imbecile ? You're dull.
I've heard you eloquent.

Beowulf.

These troubles, lad,
Are over-pressing me ; I'm like an old
O'erladen cart that cracks beneath the sheaves.
They put too much upon me. In the wood,
Under the oak-boughs they are hanging them ?

Harold. Oh, you have mighty memories to climb ;
Away in the great passes you are safe.
There's no remembrance in my youth's routine.
No sweet denial for fair freedom's sake,
No passion-hoarding for the prodigal
Spendthrift fulfilment of a great desire ;
No fine asperities of hope, no thrill,
Awe, and exhilaration of a joy
That toils a-hung'ring towards its blessedness.
You cannot know the pang, the helpless love
For my own England that has cast me off,
That will not have me live or die for her.
What is one's country ? The sole woman-child,
Rosy and prattling daughter of a Past
Too winnowed in experience, too grave

For blood's desire to mix with reverence ;
 While *she*, in tender prime, no grace of youth
 Awanting to her, ravishes the heart,
 And teaches wisdom in the ecstasy
 Of nuptial consummation. Oh, to breathe
 The name that she hath taught with her own lips,
 To know it is the Norman's heritage,
 To know that she herself will change ! Before
 She plays the harlot, I will seal my soul
 From agony ; the beasts in spotted heaps
 I'll slay, and cast their corpses o'er the fence
 Of Malf, the Saxon guardian of the deer.
 I'll rot before his eyes, hung on the oak
 That branches toward his door. I'll spoil the edge
 Of his slave's appetite. Minstead no more
 Shall cook and eat its mess of felon's meat ;
 There shall be some recoil. [*Breaks through the boughs.*
Beowulf. He'll put it down,
 This fattening on the people's provender.
 There's nothing done except at cost of life.
 My lad . . .
 His voice rang free, a bird upon the wing,
 The lark's victorious pinion in the trill
 Of his young note. The linnets on the twig
 Jar me with insect twitter. By-and-by
 I'll sit beside the gallows ; I've the time. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.—*Gloucester. A Room. Enter Bishops Gundulf, Walkelin, and others ; Robert Fitz-hamon, Robert of Meulan, and other Nobles.*

Gundulf [*showing a petition*]. From holy Anselm comes
 this blessed leaf
 Of healing and assuagement to the land
 Fevered with ulcerous sore. Pray Heav'n this balm
 Soften the rancour of the royal heart.
Fitz-hamon. I fear me it will irritate : the king

Hath heard on th' instant that by traitors' hands
His Ralf is put to sea. The storm on 's face
I fled from : there was lightning in its clouds,
And they were ranked for vengeance.

Walkelin. He hath heard
Of this petition, and will doubtless sign.
He blesses even now in secrecy
The tranquil abbot hither journeying.
Believe me. . . .

[*Enter the King.*]

Rufus. Where is Ralf? The rumour goes
He is arrested and borne over sea.
Now listen, gentlemen, by Lucca's face,
I'll throw that torch still hissing from the wave,
A brand shall set your bishoprics in flames.
My churls !—it shall be worse for them ; I'll throw
A rope across the land,—whether it yield
Or not, it shall be taxed. I'll make myself
The heir of every benefice,—the monks
Shall starve—the——

Fitz-hamon. We, my lord, are ignorant
Of any misadventure.

Gundulf. But, if Heav'n
Deign to chastise a base misgovernor,
Beseech your Majesty in holy fear
Receive the dreadful warning and repent.

Walkelin. My liege, there is another raging sea
Waits to engulf us all—the people's hate.
This See of Canterbury . . .

Rufus. Ha, ha, ha !
You jest, Sir Bishop. I will walk this sea
In royal progress.

Gundulf. Stay that reckless tongue,
Ere for its sin a sudden leprosy
Snow-like envelop your affrightèd soul.

Fitz-hamon. Here comes a messenger !

[*Enter a Messenger.*]

Rufus. With dripping clothes.
 A mariner. How now !
 From the whale's belly hast extracted him,
 The mighty woe-pronouncer on you all,
 My pious lords ?

Messenger. Sir Ranulf greets his liege,
 Bids me report—from great calamity
 Being delivered, to the castle gates
 He journeys swiftly.

Rufus. Give him welcome, lords !
 Escort him to the presence. Bishops, go !
 [Exeunt some of the Bishops and Lords.]
 Ha, ha ! They shall receive their ravisher
 As the chief nurse and pastor of the flock.
 He's chuckling with them now.

Gundulf [aside]. Heav'n save the king
 From a deservèd chastisement.

Fitz-hamon. He hath
 Some ground for his displeasure.

Rufus [ascending his throne]. To my throne !
 Place for the chancellor beside. Make way.

[Enter Flambarð and Bishops.]

What ! back again,
 My peerless chancellor, my jovial Ralf !
 My sometime kitchen-clerk, my jolly priest,
 Most scrupulous financier, and lord
 Over God's heritage—the virtuous way
 Of estimating to an ounce the fleece,
 The silky-hided revenues that 'long
 To my fierce crosier-bearing royalties.
 Art wet, storm-frosted, naked and despoiled ?
 The murderers ! Had they extinguish'd *you*,
 My fire-brand to the foxes, my gay flame,
 My t—t—t—or—ch, my——

Flambarð. Stop that stuttering, my liege.
 'Twas I outwitted them. To see the fools,
 When they had made me captive, fail to fix

How to despatch me ;—should they drown or slay ?
 I recommended that the prisoner
 Should, by compression of the thumb to throat,
 A bloodless corpse, resign his rich attire
 Unsullied to his capturers. They laughed,
 Fell to the survey, and grew quarrelsome,
 While friendly winds rose higher. In the gale
 My seamanship [is there, my liege, a craft
 Of which I am not master?] awed the men,
 Coupled with just a sly, malicious, half-
 Retaliating, pious hint of how
 They were delivered to my hand, and must
 Cry *mercy!* would I pray them into port.
 At landing, I had pow'r to pack them all
 In prison for the hangman's courtesies ;
 But plucked them by the beard and bade them drink
 Health to my body and their damning souls.
 So blessed them and departed. What's the news ?

Rufus. Why, Ralf, a pray'r, a loyal loving pray'r—
 Ha, ha !—that I should strictly give command
 The people shall entreat the Lord to change
 My heart. . . . Sweet Ralf, here is my signature
 With laughter's palsy somewhat tremulous. [*Signs the paper.*
 Conceive it ! ho ! a thousand muffled mouths
 To change this heart and force me cast you off.
 I warrant they would sweat at it. Ho, ho !

Flambard. Good jest, i' faith !

Rufus. And since ye now have warrant for your knees,
 Committing you to fasting's penury,
 And much hard labour of the lips, I pray
 Begone ! [*Waving his hand.*
 While I await the issues of this war,
 This sally, this celestial enterprise.
 Like a good tow'r I stand, resistant, firm ;
 Seek ye to undermine me with your pray'rs,
 Who bootless batter my thick-wallèd will.
 Ay, but I swear, by my own mother's soul,

Tho' you should summon the great Overlord,
To quadruple your forces in this siege,
You will not . . .

Flambard. Leave them threatless to their pray'rs.
Beseech you give me an hour's audience ;
Embrace me as your new-restored heir.
Let us make merry.

Rufus [to Attendants]. Pack the churchmen off !
And you, my lords, the council is at end. [*Exeunt Bishops.*]
Some two hours later and we meet at hunt.
My Ralf, your king himself shall slay the deer
That with full, feastful Norman courtesy
Confirms your welcome at our board to-night ;
The rich and savoury meat of your return.
Meanwhile I feed on gluttonous. [*To Lords.*] Retire !
[*Exeunt Lords.*]

What knitting still your handsome brows ? Uncrease !
Let us to laughter.

Flambard. They betake themselves
To pray'rs, the beldam's refuge. Nought to fear ;
We may retain the See of Canterb'ry.
I have no further scruple—that is—dread.
We may to work.

Rufus. My pretty Publican,
Too rigorous in sooth you rate the dues
And issues of this action to enjoy
Its perfect rustic innocence. Conceive
This heart, this prodigal, rapacious heart,
This wine-warmed bosom, this gold-hardened breast,
This bubbling fount of life that feeds and fills
Must be dried up to dribble of the monk !
Let's cut our ruddy curls and grow austere
As pious Lanfranc, for whose soul I pray,
Being so affluent in his revenues.
My rosy Ralf, let us resemble him,
And love these hinds and give them liberties,
And pray that we may think upon the Church,

And lay our jewels 'mid be-sainted bones.
 Oh, let us pray that this may come to pass,
 And show our humbled faith in miracle.
 They have permission ; let them pray their best,
 While I perform my worst.—What didst thou say
 Of this vile Purkis and his more offence
 Against our forest-laws and honest Malf,
 The guardian of our deer ?

Flambard. He slaughters them.
 You know there is a custom that the lord
 Of Minstead claims with every summer's sun
 A stately buck or doe at Llammas-tide,
 Provided only that, if either fall
 Within the forest-bound, he leave a haunch
 To show the antler'd beast's true overlord.
 This Purkis, chafing one of Saxon blood
 Should servile eat our royal venison,
 Heap'd Minstead-tracks with gory haunch and head,
 And, breaking all restraint, defiantly
 Dared Malf to meddle with his sport.

Rufus. A dog
 To be unclaw'd ! Hot-irons ! Torture, man !
 Don't trust to the ordeal. God's no judge
 Of forest-laws ; He never followed deer.
 A cord about his throat ! Within my bounds,
 My b—b—b—ou—nd—s !

Flambard. My lord, you grow too sudden red.
 Chafe not so angrily.—He's in a fit.

[*Beckons and whispers to a Servant*

Name but a forest-treason to this House
 It foams i' the mouth half-lunatic. How now ?
 A rope shall perch the medd'ling clown tree-high
 From further mischief.

Rufus. It—it drives me mad.
 I will have every inch of earth ;—the half
 My realm in hands of priests, and my fair woods,
 My noble deer ! . . . I will be absolute

While there is any breath
Left in my body : no competitor
Shall rival me. King William shall be sole
Archbishop—Anselm they are praying for—
Cur—cur—se him !—of Canterbury.

Flambard. Tut, my liege,
We'll bleed you of these humours. You're perverse.

[*Enter John de Villula.*]

Good my lord bishop, help me raise the king ;
He's stiff and speechless.

De Villula. Short, too, i' the neck !
These sudden cholers . . . with profanity. . . .
Heav'n looks not kindly on the arrogant.
A little water. Ay, ay ! he revives ;
The Lord looks on his people. . . . This is sent
Doubtless in mercy to admonish him.

[*Exeunt, bearing Rufus.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Dusk : a windy cleared place. Harold's body bleaching on a gallows : near it Beowulf.*

Beowulf. I feel it's here ; I have no need to see.
I'm glad they murdered him, not made him dark ;
For now he's dead the Earth will think on him
As she unweaves his body bit by bit.
She'll have time like the women-folk at work
To turn all over in her mind, and get
His wrongs by heart. He never trusted her ;
He thought her slow . . . she's old,
It's true ; and no ambition for herself :
When the corpse lies where she has given suck
The lusty days stir in her. [*Enter Wilfrith.*] Who is here ?

Wilfrith. Wilfrith ! I often come to pray for him ;
I loved him ; it's like standing by the cross,
The thief's—and he my brother ! As a child
He pushed me from him ; I was timorous.
I have more reason now to be afraid—
He died impenitent. [*Aloud.*] O grandfather,
Let us go home ; we can pray better there !

Beowulf. Pray ! pray ! Are you a wench to chatter so ?
Does not your tongue grow rigid in your head,
A corpse to bear that silence company ?
Have you no death in you ? Oh, say your prayers ;
I will keep mourning in my ruined ears
The passing of his voice.

Wilfrith.

But, father, think !

We're praying for his soul, that it may rest.

Beowulf. Is it a monk? Do we all take to cells
In our walled coffins?

Wilfrith. Rumour's in the air
King Harold lingers still a penitent
At Chester, wailing sore his people's pride,
Whose uncurbed spirit still refuses peace
With William, the true heritor.

Beowulf. How like
This sounds to the king's voice—in woman's clothes!
Trickle your puny lies.

Wilfrith. It may be true.
They say he frees us from our loyalty;
And bids us tend the land in quietness,
Yielding the Church her dues.

Beowulf. The land, O God,
The soil! . . . The people's common earth
They trench and furrow for their sustenance,
Let fall their sweat in, put away their dead
For the cool dark of . . . [*Enter Purkis.*] But I hear
a step.—

I'll have your lying words put to the sword.

Purkis. Why, grand-dad, whew! find you in company
Of our young priest to keep the devils off
My poor lad's corse? [*Aside.*] He'd better keep the crows.
Oh, it's insufferable the way he snuffs
This carrion. I'm his father; I have eyes.
Harold, my boy, we're hidden in the womb
When we're a-making. Faugh, these processes
Infamous in exposure! [*Aloud.*] Come away,
And if I catch you sneaking here——

Beowulf. You'll swear
King Harold lies at Waltham.

Purkis [*aside*]. He's confused
Betwixt the great King Harold and my son.
He's growing childish with his long confine
I' the constant dark; new trouble 'mazes him.

[*Aloud.*] Come off, I can't stay here ; there's pestilence.

Wilfrith [*in an undertone*]. Speak to him, father ; he can't see it right,

And if I argue, he's so terrible,

My mind is laid like corn ; we shall be lost

If thus we break the fences of the law,

And harm the unoffending gentlefolk.

The sight of him [*pointing to Beowulf, who walks apart*]
unsettles all our youth.

We lost our Harold through his vengeance ;

He cuts our lads off faster than the king

Fulfils his dreadful threats ; we're perishing,

The Normans gaining ground.

Purkis.

Oh, never fear,

We will be masters ; there's the stuff in us ;

We're used to the pace of Nature and keep step ;

Our habits are not conquered ; like the fowls

We flap our wings at eventide and roost ;

Breed, too, uncommon fast. We'll grow anon

A forest of stout youngsters for the old

Plantations they have put the hatchet to ;

And force the king protect them tenderly

As the pleasure-trees now filling into wood.

He will not have a choice.

Wilfrith [*pointing to Beowulf*]. His sinful soul !

Purkis. He's damning daily as men reap the corn

By armfuls, if a monk should measure him.

Heaven clothes itself in our infirmities ;

And I, who am his son, make bold to hope

That God will take upon Himself those eyes

[*Turning to Beowulf.*

To look upon his faults ;—He's merciful.

But hold you off awhile ; he's mumbling now ;

His tottering lips are haply setting out

In age for holy land.

Beowulf [*aside*]. I breathe the air ;

The tongues of free men should inhabit it ;

It is infested by the shackled speech
Of base petitioners.

Wilfrith [to Purkis]. But, Harold, think !
He died without God's body ; all our lives
We must say masses for him fearfully.
There is a King in heaven we must serve,
Or die as traitors.

Beowulf. Is God called a King ?
I'll never, never trust Him.

Purkis [to Wilfrith]. Tut, my lad,
You're over-anxious ; as I take it now,
Our souls were never private property
A man might call his own ;—I rather hold
Our duty's simply a stupendous fief
Our Overlord lets out to us in bits
To plod at peaceful, putting armour on
When His old quarrel with the devil needs
Sword-settling ; but the more part of our days
It's produce He requires, not skirmishing.
These sins of ours
Let's put 'em in as muck about our roots,
Not fling to waste. Those early Norman years
I had a murderous heart ; I plucked it out,
Flung to the refuse ; now it's rotted down
To just a sturdy holding to my rights.
If you *will* put away your baser parts,
You'll grow a slender crop. Feed full the field
If you desire the hundred-fold increase,
I say . . . but you, religious, cannot learn
The right use of your sins. It's wasting breath
To speak to you. [*Exit Wilfrith.*] [*Looking at Beowulf.*]

Can't say it's growing dark ;
[*Aloud.*] Why stars are all a-throbbing overhead ;
Now we may sleep, and safe : Heaven's sentinel.

Beowulf. Send off the youngster to his rushes. Hark !
It has been pouring on my brain ; they found
A corpse, a counterfeit ; they buried it

I' the Norman Minster : *he* is on the beach
 Where the waves join in battle ; in the cairn
 Of England's stones the treasure of his heart.
 The winds blow over him ; he hears them pass
 Fresh from this gibbet, and the mound's aheave . . .
 He's under the great Standard ! . . .

Purkis [*aside*].

Prophecy

Is just a leak o' the spirit, drains the head
 O' the angry, bubbling waters that would lash
 The afflicted lunatic : he's merry now
 For come two hours,—a-chuckling at his dreams.—
 Ay, dad, we'll gather round *the Fighting Man*. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Monastery near Gloucester. Anselm and Eadmer.*

Anselm. God gives His bread to children who are sweet
 With golden faith ; to thinkers and to men
 Of striving reason He presents a stone,
 That they should toil and find the heav'nly food
 The sinews of the brain have strength to win.
 O Edmer, when my thought was weak and glad
 As a young bird that only knows the nest ;
 When as a child of Italy I lay
 Asleep, the mountains lifted round my home,
 My spirit wandered from my little bed,
 And walked upon the heights ; 'twas harvest-time,
 And maidens paused above the plenteous sheaves.
 Methought I'd climb to Heaven and complain
 How slowly they were binding the red corn.
 I reached the hall of Heaven—it was still ;
 The Lord and His good butler keeping house,
 But all the angels were a-harvesting.
 A childish tire was plaintive in my voice
 That told Him of His servants' negligence ;
 He smiled, and bread was brought ; He stooped and put
 A silver-bleachèd morsel to my lips ;

'Neath His kind brows I ate, and never yet
Have lost the strong renewal of that meat.

Eadmer. The sweetest story I have ever heard.
My pen shall keep it for all future days
To learn how Heav'n dealeth with the child.

Anselm. How glorious its dealing with the man !
It gives not, that his reason may attain,
And like a casket in possession hard
Close round the gem of absolute belief.
Faith is the child's gift, and Philosophy
The man's achievement. Blessèd toil, to walk
Where babes are carried past on angel-wings ;
To compass Mystery, to conquer Space,
Subjugate cunning Time, Eternity's
Protean shapes, and changes to illude
Man's recognition : in our mind to clutch
The veritable Being, force it yield
And re-assume itself.

Eadmer. Too high your thoughts.
I cannot reach the level of your joy.

Anselm. Nay, Edmer, hark ! It is Philosophy
That knocks at Heaven's gate ; Faith finds the door
Wide open—'tis the hand of Thought that calls
St. Peter to his charge ; he opens wide ;
And the mind enters with the awful tread
Of deep assurance that vast home sublime
Of the Supreme Idea, and beholds
Th' ineffable Existence. I have toiled
And fasted, in the midnight watches cried,
Consumed the light within me nigh to ash,
And desolated human frailty 'neath
The march and stress of battling Intellect,
To reach that certain knowledge of my God,
Clothed in perfection of reality.

Eadmer. O rare and mighty thinker, and withal
A holy, loving saint, I can but write
The chronicle of your loved destiny,

That walks along the earth ; when you aspire
To God, your pen is sole historian
Of beatific life beyond mine eyes.

Anselm. Dear English Edmer, thy meek, fervent soul
Hath often rested where I toil to stand.
My life's disciple, we will never part,
Till Death give promise we shall ever join
In bond that no mortality assails.
The King of England holds me in his realm ;
But when he grants me passage to my home
At streamy, wooded Bec, thou too shalt come,
And write the tale of Man for men to be ;
And I will follow to its virgin source
The soul that makes his being's sacred worth.
So will we work in cloister'd peace, no storm
Of outward passion piercing our still days.

[*Enter Monks with a Messenger.*]

1st Monk. Most holy father——

2nd Monk. Blessed Anselm, hear !

1st Monk. This man is from the king, who lieth sick
Well-nigh to death.

Messenger. He groans and cries for help
As he were drowning in the fear of death.

Anselm. I cannot go.

Messenger. A cruel word to pass
From lips reputed kind. He sobs for aid
Against the demons mocking at his soul.

Anselm. I cannot go ; a fear I may not name
Stands in the path you show me. There are men
Of comfortable spirit nigh the king.
Why will you pierce my heart with augury
Of doom to all my hopes ?

Messenger. Nay, never fear
He'll give us our archbishop : there he's stiff
As yew, and fatal to his people's pray'r.

Anselm [*aside*]. The peace, the wooded monastery. Oh !
My books, my problems, and the lonely strife

With mystery, the joyous blessing won !—
 Seek for another comforter. My fate
 Is sealed with condemnation if I go.

Messenger. No other man can save our lord the king
 From anguish such as makes his dying hour
 The vestibule to Hell.

1st Monk. Oh, pity him.

2nd Monk. Have mercy on his wicked panting soul.

Anselm. I cannot go—yet, Edmer, think of it !
 No soothing, no access of grateful peace
 As herald of Death's perfect silencing ;
 All conflict, insurrection, and affright,
 That put to shame the calm invincible
 Whose presence stills the threshold. I must go,
 To shed some dew before the coming night,
 And make its shade more gentle.

Eadmer. He is won.

The stricken king will feel upon the air
 The benediction of his gracious age.

Anselm. The poor aghasted soul.

1st Monk. Ay, think of it ;

The terrible, black exit.

2nd Monk. And the lone,

Fire-beaconed journey.

Eadmer. And the final death.—

Tears make his eyes more precious. He is won.

Anselm. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, draws
 My feet to carry its sweet messages.

I come.—Eadmer, how the future hangs
 Its chains upon my calling, which is thought
 And meditation on eternal truth.

Thus could I freely serve, and yet my God,
 I know, will bind my lot to slavery.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The King's sick-room at Gloucester. Round the bed, William of St. Calais, Bishop Walkelin, Bishop Gundulf, Bishop John de Villula, Flambarð, Bishops, Nobles, and many Attendants.*

Rufus. He has me down ; He's bending over me
To give my soul the death-grip ; but I yield.—
Good Villula, fling that vile potion down,
And pray for me. Your king is perishing
Th' eternal way.

De Villula. Imagination
Conjures the devil ; 'tis a fatal case.

Rufus. Fie, fie, the devil ! I could fling him off ;
God's overpressing me . . . and I confess.
I sore repent my many grievous sins.
Oh, oh ! the sickness strangles me at heart.
I will amend.—This cold is damning me.

De Villula. Put yonder skins about his feet. My lord,
This little potion hath a kindly heat,
Is cheery against shivers in the blood.

Rufus. Plague strike you ! you are for the gallipot ;
There is no bishop in you. Oh these br—r—ri—bes. . . .

Gundulf. God strikes him in the mouth.

Walkelin. His blasphemy
Brought on this stuttering.

Gundulf. To seal your groans
As those of penitence, dismiss your sins
By righteous reparation for all wrong.
Set free the captives, with death-chained hand
Undo the living fetters.

Meulan. And forgive
The debtor.

Gundulf. Yield her pastors to the Church.

Rufus. I'll do all this. Good souls, deliver me.

Gundulf. To God belongs deliverance, my king.
But dare you lose His mercy by the sin
Of keeping in a wailing bondage drear

The Church of Churches, Christ's most holy Church
Of Canterb'ry?

Rufus. I never sold——

De Villula. Forbear.

The pulse is flapping like to dying wings ;
And what an eagle perishes !—But see,
Here comes the doctor to the stricken soul,
The good physician, who with holy words
Can heal the spirit's ulcer, and refresh
With draughts celestial. Holy Anselm, peace
And benediction !

[*Enter Anselm, Eadmer, Eustace, and Baldwin of Tournay.*]

Anselm. Doth the king still live?

Gundulf. In penitence he toils to breathe his last.

Anselm. What counsel have ye dropped into his ear,
How made its chest the treasury of grace ?
How have ye moved him ?

Gundulf. 'Tis the might of God
Hath cleft his stubbornness ; our feeble lips
Have urged confession, reparation, all
The duties of the dying penitent.

Anselm. 'Tis well.

Walkelin. Our lips are weak, but thine are strong.
Urge thou the only hope, the only means.

Gundulf. Lord Anselm, holy father, speak to him.
He lies with sickened cheeks and haunted eyes.
Speak.

Walkelin. We beseech thee, speak.

Flambard. Nay, comfort him ;

A cup of good red wine.

De Villula. Inflammat'ry !

Damnation ! not a drop. Lord Anselm, speak :
He sees you.

Anselm. Peace be to the penitent.
My king, I have strange hope that you will live
And leave this lowly bed of languishing,
If with a hearty will you turn from sin,

And rule your people with mild righteousness.
Will your soul promise this ?

Rufus. All, all.

Anselm. To rule

With justice and with mercy, to unbind
The links of bondage, pardon every debt,
Restore its shepherd to each mourning Church,
So help you God.

Rufus. So help me God, I will.

Renew this promise made in His dread Name
To God before the altar. Bishops, go.

Anselm. Let the clerks write a proclamation, sealed,
Lord Chancellor, by you, to tell the land
That deeds will flow from promise unto God.

Gundulf. There is one other sin upon his soul :
He gives the Church no primate.

Walkelin. Fill the Sec.

St. Calais [*aside*]. Perchance my time hath come.

Gundulf. Receive our pray'r.

Rufus. So do I purpose.

St. Calais. Ha !

Walkelin. He will.

Flambard. Attend.

Gundulf. Laus Deo ! Let our lord the king make known
Whom he deems worthy.

St. Calais. See, he tries to rise !

De Villula. 'Tis perilous.

Rufus. I choose this holy man,

Anselm.

The Nobles. O joy !

The Bishops. A blessed word ! Praise, praise !

Joy, joy to England ! Bring the past'ral staff.

Hail, our Archbishop, hail !

Eadmer. How wan he grows,

And shivers like a tree against the axe.

Anselm [*aside*]. 'Tis on me ! I am victim of this hour.
Cover me from the conflict ! Clear as sight—

The silent cloister, and my brazen lamp,
 The vaulting that I look to in my thought,
 The seven ribs that cross it ! [*Aloud.*] No, no, no !
 I am not your Archbishop. Peace !—No more
 Would meditation visit me.—No pow'r
 Shall make me your Archbishop.—And the care
 And conflict.—I am old, unworthy, weak.

Walkelin. Lay hands upon him.

Meulan. Drag him to the bed.

Anselm. I am the subject of another realm ;
 I owe allegiance to his Grace the Duke ;
 To mine Archbishop all obedience.

Walkelin. Fight not the will of God, nor cast aside
 His choice ; a work is ready to your hands.
 Abominations breed and multiply ;
 Christ's holy faith is well-nigh dead and gone
 From English shores.

Gundulf [*aside*]. By that man's tyranny
 We, and the Churches that we ought to rule,
 Fall into danger of eternal death.

[*Aloud.*] Wilt thou, when thou canst help us, scorn our
 pray'r ?

Anselm. I may not grant it—never.

Walkelin. Cruel saint,
 The mother Church of Canterbury kneels.
 Wilt thou not raise her up ?

Anselm. I am unused
 To worldly business. Let me lead the life
 And keep the peaceful calling that I love.

Gundulf. Show us the way of God, and pray for us—
 Discharge of business be our humble trust.

Anselm. All that ye do and purpose is but naught.

Walkelin. Our lord the king, the abbot is self-willed
 And obstinate. We pray you speak to him.

Rufus. O Anselm, you condemn me to the flames.
 Recall your faithful friendship to my sire
 And mother. By that friendship, save their son ;

Save, I adjure thee, soul and body. Death
 For ever will confound me if I die
 Still holding the archbishopric. O help,
 Then help me, lord and father !

Anselm. Would to God
 That I might die ! Good brothers, help me, help !

Baldwin. If 'tis the will of God that so it be,
 Who shall withstand His will ?

Rufus. Kneel, bishops, kneel.

Bishops [to Anselm]. You scant his dying breath, fulfil
 with gall

His moments' strait enclosure. All the sins,
 Oppressions in the land will heap the door
 Of your most ruthless, closed, and barrèd heart.
 Our knees are round its threshold.

Anselm. Lo, I fall
 Before you in my soul's extremity.

You are a bitter crowd to force my mind
 Against its inborn judgment that my life
 Was meant to be a temple to God's thought,
 A shrine for Truth, who seeks her worshippers
 Where silence is as marble round the air.

I am a still old man. Upon my knees
 I pray you break not on God's solitude
 That's reared about my brain.

Gundulf. He fights with God.
 The king holds out the staff.

Walkelin. Which he shall take,
 Tho' clenched his hand.

Meulan. Raise his forefinger. So !
 [*They force the staff into his hand.*]

All. Long live the Bishop !

Walkelin. Take him to the church.

Anselm. Ye act in ignorance. The king will live.
 Why will ye yoke an old and feeble sheep
 With a young bull untameable and fierce ?
 Your joy will sink to sorrow. I shall fall

A victim, and the king will trample you
Beneath his unchecked feet. Alas, alas !

[*Exeunt, dragging Anselm and chanting Te Deums.*
De Villula. The pulse is firmer and the breath more sure.

SCENE IV.—*Hastings. A Street. Enter Bishop Gundulf, Eadmer, and Baldwin.*

Gundulf. Alas ! the dew of penitence is dry,
And parched the healèd soul. Once more the blood
Swells through the kingly veins with shining red ;
But in its triumph grace is overthrown.
The king is hard and healthy, and his strength,
New-knit by God, is braced to threat the sky
In horrible revenge. With him I strove,
And prayed him cherish in his days of sun
His roughly-scattered, precious, winter seed.
His visage fired and deepened till the gem
Of darkest blood within his crown was pale
Tò the swart blush of fury as he swore :
“A good man God shall never find in me ;
I have too deeply suffered at His hands.”
With that he sent to bind about the limbs,
Slack with sweet-breathing freedom, the close chains ;
His gifts were straight recalled ; each debt was held
Due as of old, and all that he had sworn
Undone in doing.

Eadmer. Save the heavy grant
To our dear master, who hath borne hard days
And looks for no relief.

Gundulf. How suffers he ?

Eadmer. The king is bent against the Norman duke,
And hath much need of money. To his feet
Cometh our master with the ready gold,
Which, sweetly tendered, is received with grace.
But afterward, thro' lust of wealth, the gift
Is scorned as small and sent unkindly back.
But he who is a father to the poor,

A most sweet mother to the sick and pinched,
 Would take no further from his lacking churls ;
 But poured the spurned gold in the beggar's lap
 Compassionate. This moved the king to wrath,
 Which still sits cloudy on his thankless brow.
 Here by the sleepy verge of this green strait
 The ships await the rising of the wind,
 And holy Anselm stays to bless the fleet.

Baldwin. The breeze will sleep, while the Court reeks
 with sin,
 Monstrous and strange. Our dear Archbishop grieves,
 Resentful, with armed looks.

Eadmer. A seraph's zeal
 Is sworded in his eyes ; his stainless brow
 Is Faith's own shield.

Gundulf. The people love him well.

Eadmer. He is their blissful advocate. Our race
 Ties round his heart its locks of flaxen hair
 As once they bound the Roman Gregory.

Baldwin. Methinks your king's damnation pains his soul ;
 Eadmer says that he will seek his side
 With moving low entreaty.

Gundulf. Let us hence,
 And see how looks the ocean's sterile plain
 That with our fair fleet should be forested.

Baldwin. A wind ! Methinks a tiny brook of air
 Steals down the parchèd channels of this calm.

Gundulf. Too fond a hope ! Let's to the water side.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*Hastings : a Room. The King moodily pacing
 to and fro, and from time to time flinging his head
 out of the window to feel the wind.*

Rufus. Curse the still winds, as huswives they keep close
 And dare not stalk abroad to work my will.
 They are for Robert : were they tangible,
 I would uneye and mutilate the knaves.

I must take ship for Normandy ; subserve,
Ye elements ; it will be worse for you
If now ye palter with me. I will rule
O'er England, Normandy, the stubborn sea,
And you, ye lurking cravens. To mine aid
Or, by the Heavenly Feet—— [*Looks out, cursing wildly.*
[*Enter Anselm.*]

Of the lost rank and nearness of a son.

Rufus. Lost, lost, yea *damned*! If there were any hope
I dare not curse. God has a memory
For old offences, and they spring up fresh
With every vicious phrensy of the blood.
Mend me? I am incorrigible. Speak!
What remedy is in your conscience?

Anselm. Let me hold synod ere the council part.
We will denounce the sins effeminate
That spread corruption on this English ground;
And scourge with spiritual whips the slaves
Bartering their manhood's birthright-liberty.
Help me to stay this curse; and for your soul—
I'd part with all the riches of my faith
So I might offer it a precious pearl
To Christ the treasure-seeker. Cleanse yourself,
Bow in the dust; then peaceful as a child
That waits in patience the authority
That honours him with business or command,
Pause for the favouring wind.

Rufus. And did I choose
Stir in the matter, what would come of it
For you, Archbishop?

Anselm. Nothing: but for God
Much, and for you. [*Enter Eadmer.*] Edmer! He brings
some news

Of import, thus to break our privacy.
[*To Eadmer.*] Seek'st thou the king?

Eadmer [*to the King*]. Oh pardon, that I thus
Present the mariners' impatient prayer
For instant embarkation. All's astir;
The sails already flutter as 'twere March,
And the sea wrinkles.

Rufus. Jolly messenger!
I was about to get me to my prayers,
But find my royal menaces suffice
To earn the traitor-winds' submission.

I stood and cursed them at the casement there,
And now they throng with halters round their necks,
Craving my pardon, humble to fulfil
My instant order ;—'tis *Embark for France*.
I'm with you. [*To Anselm.*] Good Archbishop, do not stay
To bless our sail at Hastings. We are safe
Under the Devil who walks to and fro
About the earth, and snorts out mighty winds.
Farewell ! [*Rushes out.*]

Anselm. My Edmer, we will quit the court
With speed, and [*looking after the King*] henceforth leave
him to his will. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Dusk : a Glade of the New Forest. Enter from the shade the King, Gilbert of Clare, Walter Tirel, William of Breteuil, and Attendants.*

Rufus. My horse dead in the hunt ; and you dismount !
It was an ugly omen ; we will leave
His carcase in the forest : men will say
His rider next will fall, a merry jest !

Breteuil. My liege, I pray you put away this mood ;
I am pursued by a fell lunatic,
A strange distempered man, who dogs my steps
Importunate as sinner for his shrift ;
And all his burden—"Woe, woe to the king
In the thick shade :—it is the seat of woe—
The leaves drop poison on him ; bid him seek
His safety in the hall of Winchester."
And oft as I rebuke him he grows wan,
As if with fearful prophecies withheld ;
His silence so appalling me I turn
And desperately ravage on his thought,
Which yielded dumbs me with its ghastliness.
His utterances keep no steady pace ;
They flit and flicker as a spirit's form
Checked and recurring. Give the omen heed.

Tirel. I've snapt my bow-string, sure our sport is crost.

Clare. It's growing dun, and these accursèd leaves
Thicken the texture of the dark. Our path
Is broken into bog ; unless we chance

Upon some peasant tramping through the gorse
To his embowerèd cot, we shall keep watch
Till season of these apparitions 'rise.

Rufus. Tush, Gilbert ; you're too often on your knees ;
These taxes make men superstitious ;
Extortion is unsettling to the brain.
At cost of a few harmless idiots
We'll fill our c—c—o—offers

. Gilbert, you are dull,
You cannot grasp my huge ambition ;
In kingship I have yet my spurs to win.
What, king of England, Scotland's overlord !
Robert is penniless ; I'll buy his lands
From these pinched peasants ; I require more coast,
More land, more races under sovereignty.
I covet ; and defy the great command
To earth's horizon : my rapacity
Knocks at the very gates of Rome itself.
I'll not be balked.

Breteuil. Oh, vaunt at Westminster ;
But here there is miasma in the air ;
'Tis not a spot for blasphemy.

Rufus. Let's lure
Our lord archbishop down to bless the place ;
And while he makes it wholesome, may the pest
Of a marsh-fever blast him !

It grows dark.
The busy twilight 's weaving bushes now,
And all we know of Malwood's vicinage
Is that the forest girds it ; and the trees

[*Enter Beowulf.*]

Here multiply about us. In a word,
I'm hungry, gentlemen ; I'd drink the health
Of this wood-genius that is dogging me
In a fair flagon.

Clare. Yonder ! Curb your mouth.

[*Beowulf disappears*]

Did you not see a monster ?

Tirel.

Hollow-eyed,

Ghostly about the temples, terrible.

[*Aside.*] Heaven will send instruments to punish him,

If he thus fronts audaciously the threat

Of these dire portents. [*Aloud.*] Let us to our prayers ;

Hell's habitants are rousing from their sleep.

Rufus. Our prayers ? You shall say grace before we dine ;

Starving, my lips shall never trudge to Heaven.

[*Re-enter Beowulf.*]

Let's question yonder spectre in the mist.

A burly shade !

Tirel. He'll trap us to our death.

I'll back to horse.

Rufus.

My gallant followers !

Breteuil. We ne'er have been aghasted on the field ;

When God draws shapes upon the air, no eye

Can look upon the doomful images.

Clare. It is a fresco from the wall of hell

To fright us to repentance.

Rufus [*approaching Beowulf*]. Eyeless knave,
Look toward me with your knees ; I am your king.

Tirel. He's taller than a man ; he's stalking close.

Breteuil. Now I discern it is some blinded hind,
With treason lurking in the hollowed cells
Of his orbs' cavities. Keep watch on him.

[*Standing near Beowulf with a whip.*]

Beowulf. You are my king ? I dare you strike at me.
You're out a-hunting ?

Rufus.

I don't trap my game ;

You're not for royal sport who cannot run.

Come now, mine honest yeoman, I'll forgive

That ancient treason that hath cost thy sight,

And re-instate thee in my royal love,

So thou wilt snuff the track to Malwood lodge.

Beowulf [*goes a little apart*]. It must be here : your
voice has lit the torch

Of the very moment ; yes, it must be here,
 Where earth has soaked your curses up like rain
 To feed the swelling fibres of your fate.
 Here have you planted your malignant sway ;
 Here have you taught us resignation ;
 Here are you absolute. [*Breteuil with his whip cuts Beowulf's forehead.*] It must be here
 Where your vile hand . . .

Breteuil. The king hath struck you not.
 I caught my whip across the insolence
 Of your audacious brow : leave prophecy
 Or I will lop your lifted hand.

Rufus. Let be :
 His fearlessness assuages me ; I'm used
 To threats of holy men. [*To Beowulf.*] Presage your worst.
 [*Aside.*] I have not cringed to Anselm ; here's a power
 I would not grapple with ; it's like the town
 My limbs shook at the siege of . . . just a fit.

[*Enter Purkis.*]

Here is another, and a merrier fiend.

How now ? wilt fright us ?

Purkis [to Beowulf]. You old torment, come !
 What has the moon to say to you, i' faith ?
 Will you not home till curfew ? [*To Attendants.*] Used to be
 A bell at the little church ; they cut its tongue
 At time of the great clearing ; doesn't pay,
 This mutilation, makes us all confused
 To have to look about for eyes and hands.
 One needs one's senses pat. [*To Beowulf.*] Old lumber-
 brain,

The frogs are croaking ; I must haul you home.

Rufus. Stay ! As I am a knight, my merry knave,
 Your voice hath something of the lantern in 't
 And promises good guidance. Jovial churl,
 Your king is tangled in his forest-boughs ;
 Release him from his toils : direct his train
 The nearest way to Malwood.

Purkis [*to Attendants*]. Keep the trees
Well to the left ; the lodge is on the height.
[*To King.*] My liege, this is my father ; he is old ;
And though the dark's indifferent to his eyes,
He's open to the chill. By your good leave
I'll take him off to roost. [*Purkis retires with Beowulf.*

Rufus. My mother's soul,
He's a rare son ! This filial reverence
Shall be rewarded. [*To Attendants.*] Do you know this
knave ?

Attendants. Purkis, the charcoal-burner.

Rufus. Let him own
His bit of blasted ground : he's duteous.
[*To Attendants.*] Convey our pleasure to the churl. I'd fear
I tell you, gentlemen, to wrong a piece
Of so sweet filial courtesy : let's on.
I've laid the spectres ;—nay, that is the moon
Smiling benignant on us. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Enter St. Calais, conning a parchment, and at intervals writing.*

St. Calais. William is Cæsar of our island-world :
This must be emphasized ; the Scots expel
His proffered king, and Wales triumphantly
Throws down his barrier-castles. 'Tis the hour
When faith is feeble to enforce a creed.
The king is Emperor, though evidence
Err in defect, and to refuse a Pope
Is his prerogative. [*Enter Robert of Meulan and Flambard*
conversing.] Anselm shall bow.
Abjure his Urban, or resign the staff
I would receive submissive. [*Looking up as he perceives*
Robert of Meulan and Flambard.] Think ye not
Our king doth suffer loss of dignity
From the Archbishop's scruple ? He remains
Unconsecrated till the pallium
From Rome invest him.

Meulan. We are full of it ;
And come to urge you press the just complaint.

Flambard. The treasury—the famine of the purse
Makes me most secular. A vacant see
Would feed it, if the king were pastoral
In his authority.

Meulan. Bold prater, peace.

Flambard. Nay, but my talents are for candlestick,
Not bushel-hiding. I deserve some praise.
Know you how grew your truce with Normandy ?
Did I not summon troops,—stout Englishmen,
Each with the money of his maintenance,
Loyal to serve the king beyond the sea,
And at the water's edge dismiss the fools,
Their good bread-money garnered in my hand—
Ten thousand pounds, with which we bribed the French ?
You shall give honour to my arguments ;
For reason must express necessity
As if she had a choice : it is her art,
And I have learnt it. Money we must have.
Is there not talk of a crusade ? May be
We shall buy Normandy, while Robert fights
In Palestine : our king, not covetous,
But of fraternal love and piety
Must pour his crowns down for the holy cause.
This he can do, if Canterbury yield
Her due revènués.

Meulan. Openly, our aim
Must be devotion to the royal will
In everything. [*To St. Calais.*] Now, my lord bishop,
come.

You are our spokesman, and must presently
To our rebellious primate read a scroll
From your own lips that clearly shall present
Choice 'twixt submission and stern banishment. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Rockingham. A Hall, divided by folded curtains. In the outer chamber, Anselm, Eadmer, Baldwin, and other Monks, Clerks, and Laymen. Within the presence-chamber, the King, Robert of Meulan, other Nobles, and Bishops.*

Anselm. Come forth, ye lords and bishops.—I will stand.
Eadmer, my stole is falling ; set it right.

Good friend, my thanks.

[*Enter from within Bishop William of St. Calais, Bishop Walkelin, Bishop John de Villula, and other Bishops and Nobles.*]

Walkelin. A seat of easy slope.
We're like to be long sitting.

St. Calais. Peace !—My lord
Of Meulan, to the right there's room.

Anselm. Attend.

I fain would take from hands pontifical
The woollen scarf, the cross-marked pallium,
That sets its final honour to the rank
And office ye have forced me to assume.
My king denies me, tells me with harsh breath
My wish would snatch his crown, and that my faith
Plighted to him, and mine obedience
To Urban plighted, are as day and night
Opposed beyond all harmony. To sin
Against that faith and this obedience
Were heavy condemnation. But I hope
That you will bring them side by side as friends
And linkèd true associates. I pray
Your help and counsel in my strait ; but chief,
My brother bishops, help me of your love,
For you have laid this strange perplexity
Upon my burthened soul in choosing me
To rule your Church.

St. Calais. You are a man of God,
A lover at the feet of holiness,

Why ask our counsel? But if so you ask,
Throw yourself wholly on your monarch's will,
And we'll essay advice.

De Villula. But if you plead
A call on God's behalf to thwart the king,
We cannot give you help.

Eadmer [aside]. The spaniels cringe
As if the air were parting for the lash.
[*Looking at Anselm.*] How reverend his face ! his raised eyes
Are jewels of God's light.

Anselm. And thus you speak,
Shepherds and princes, and no counsel give
Save as the will of one man shall allow ;
Then to the Shepherd and the Prince of all
I turn for aid. I unto Cæsar give
The things of Cæsar ; unto God the things
Of God. In what is godly and divine
I to God's Vicar owe obedience ;
To what is earthly in the dignity
Of Cæsar I yield reverence, and bow
My vassal-will submissive.

St. Calais. Hear ! His speech
Is traitorous.

Walkelin. His words are full of pride.

St. Calais. His gross disloyalty is worthy death.
[*To Anselm.*] We will not bear such message to the king.

Anselm. Then will I go, for none will speak my words.

Eadmer. Dear master, I will bear them to the king,
And faithfully uplift them to his ears.

Anselm. No, Edmer. Of yon lion I've no dread,
Am fearless of his den beyond that bar ;

[*Pointing to the arras dividing the Hall from the
presence-chamber.*]

And none but I shall enter.

[*Passes into the presence-chamber. Curtains drawn back.*]

Rufus [aside]. Here he comes !
Now, by the Face of Lucca, this is good.

To Anselm.] Your answer, father?

Anselm. I to Cæsar owe

The things of Cæsar ; unto God the things

Of God. In what is holy and divine

I to God's Vicar owe obedience ;

To what is earthly in the dignity

Of Cæsar I yield reverence, and bow

My vassal-will submissive.

Rufus. Traitor ! b—back !

Thou shalt re—re—return with other words. [*Exit Anselm.*

Call in

My lords and bishops.

Meulan. Hither, to the king !

[*They go into the presence. The curtain falls.*

Eadmer. Here is a seat.

Anselm. I'll lean against the wall.—

I am a stranger !

Eadmer. Master, though I bear

An English name, and have an English face,

In thee I have a part.

Anselm. Thou hast indeed.

My life is like a book before thine eyes ;

But, Edmer, there are times when men and things

Are foreign to the brain and heart and soul,

And have no common language and exchange

Of sympathies ; yet, Edmer, I am still

God's fellow-countryman, and by Him known,

And never left, avoided, or reviled :

So on the Universal Love I rise

Above the dreary severance from man.

Eadmer. Baldwin, I hear the voices in debate,

The king's high stutter and the bishops' whine,

And Meulan's serpent-sliding oratory,

Ahithophel's own speech.

Baldwin. How long they stay :

Yet the discussion waxes.

Eadmer [*pointing to Anselm*]. Holy sleep

Is on him. It hath left some infant's brow
To nestle to his temples. Such a smile
As God would light the lamps of Heaven with
Is on his face.

Baldwin. It is a miracle.
Good brother, see ! no dream possesses him ;
He is intent on some reality.

Eadmer. The lids close in their treasures ; all here
Is left untenanted ; he's turned the key
On sense, to pace the walks of Paradise
Awhile in recreation with his God.

Baldwin. They come.

[*Re-enter from the presence Bishops and Nobles.*]

Eadmer. I'll touch him gently. Meekest sleep,
Here come thy brawling enemies.

Anselm. How strange,
Unlovely !—Edmer !

Eadmer. They are coming back,
Forth from the presence.

Anselm. There was golden light
Before my Judge invisible—the light
Was feathered close with wings.

Eadmer. O master, hear ;
King William sends them back.

St. Calais. Your lord the king
Bids you all other words put by to yield
Your more confirmed answer.

Anselm. I attend.

St. Calais. You work to snatch the glory of his realm
From off your monarch's brow. Who takes away
His dignities and customs, takes his crown.
Leave thou the useless service of thy Pope ;
Embrace the fruitful friendship of thy king.
Be free, and wait the bidding of your lord
In all things ; pray for pardon, and your foes,
The mockers, shall be put to shame as deep
As is your honour high.

Anselm. Unto the head
And vicar of the Church I will be true.
If any man would prove that this my faith
To Urban breaks my oath to William sworn,
Let him stand forth and I will answer him.

[*A Knight steps forward.*]

Knight. Our lord and father, by my humble lips
Your suppliant children pray you keep good cheer.
Let not your heart be troubled : blessed Job
O'ercame the devil on his ashy dung,
And thus revengèd Adam whom the tree
Did snakily beguile.

Anselm. Thy words are balm.

Eadmer. Oh joy, the voice of God, the people's voice,
Is lifted in our cause.

Rufus [*within*]. Bishops and lords.
What answer ? [*Curtain rises. St. Calais goes to the King.*]

St. Calais. Oh, I know not what to speak !
I cannot say . . .

Rufus. How now, thou fool, art dumb ?
Damnation ! not a word ?

St. Calais. 'Tis only force
Can put him down ; if he is obstinate
Strip off the ring and staff and drive him forth.

Meulan. What ! Strip your primest vassal of his fief ;
'Twould loose the pack of troubles from their case,
Nor leave one hope of remedy. Your realm
Would rage with high seditions. Never think——

Rufus. Will nothing please you ? While I live I'll have
No equal in my kingdom.

Meulan. All our guiles,
Close-hanging counsels, like a spider's web,
His sleep-refreshèd lips with single touch
Have broken to poor shreds.

Rufus. What can be done ?
I'll tell ye, bishops. Go, and to his face
Declare that ye withdraw your fellowship

And loyalty. Ho, ho ! He will be shamed,
And groan that ever he has left his lord
To follow after Urban. Hence !

St. Calais.

We go.

Eadmer [to Anselm]. They come again with nodding
brows and eyes

That shrink before thy countenance.

St. Calais.

Henceforth

We no more love nor serve you, and the king

Withdraws protection.

Anselm.

Ye are wrong. Your love

And service are my right, withdrawn from me

Because I yield my love and fealty

Where yours and mine are due. I will not deal

As ye have dealt.—To you and to the king

I'll show a father's love, though you and he

Reject me thus. Yet for God's service I

Will keep the name, the office, and the power

With which ye did endow me, though the press

Of outward things is iron on my brain.

St. Calais. Proud man, we will report thy words.

Rufus [within].

How now ?

St. Calais. He scorns our harsh rejection.

Rufus.

All he says

Is clean against my pleasure ; not a soul

Shall be my man who chooses to be his.

Barons, withdraw from him all friendship, faith,

That he may see his gain in holding thus

Against my will—*my will*.

Meulan.

Our gracious lord,

We're not his men, we cannot take from him

What we have never given.

Rufus.

Curse them—ugh !

Meulan [to St. Calais]. Judas !

Fitz-hamon [to Walkelin]. Arch-Herod !

[*To De Villula.*]

Pilate !

St. Calais.

Would to God

The earth would open ! Shame is in my limbs
That are base shivering traitors to my will.

Walkelin. Fall, fall the roof and hide me.

Rufus.

Bishops, say !

Have ye abjured your whole obedience
To Anselm, or but such as he would claim
By Rome's authority ?

St. Calais. All, all, my lord.

Rufus. Friend, to the place of honour.—Answer thou !

Walkelin. I have abjured but such obedience
As he by Rome hath claimed.

Rufus. Go, turn your face
To yonder corner, till your chastisement
Be ready for your back.

Walkelin. My lord, my lord !

Rufus. Hence to the corner you who think with him,
And those against him welcome to our side.

Walkelin [*aside*]. With heavy coins we'll lighten punish-
ment [*They talk together apart in a corner.*]

Rufus [*aside*]. I know not how to loose him with the staff
Still glued between his fingers.

[*Enter Walter of Albano.*]

Meulan.

See who comes !

The Papal Legate, and a pallium
Is like a starry night upon his arm,
Black, blanch'd with crosses.

Rufus. Hail ! You come in time.
Place for the Bishop.

Albano. Blessings on the king
Whose might is such that Urban by my mouth
Vows that no legate adverse to thy choice
Shall cross the English borders.

Rufus. Ha ! He doth.
[*Aside.*] Then I'll acknowledge Urban, and this man
Will strip old Anselm of his ring and staff ;
And then we'll pack him safely over seas,
And be sole tyrant of his trembling Church.

That you'll obey all customs of the realm
And guard them from infringement, so once more
We'll call you ghostly father, and return
The honours of your title.

Anselm. I will swear
According to the service of my God.

Rufus [*aside*]. Beshrew you ! How I hate the words.—

Arise,
And sit beside me. From my royal hand
You shall receive the pallium.

Anselm. Not so ;
The staff I took, for it was yours to give ;
The other gift is from his hand who sits
In Peter's chair.

Albano. I'll lay it on the shrine
Of Christ in your cathedral, and from thence,
Dear, saintly primate, with your proper hand
You'll take it from Saint Peter.

People. Yea !

Anselm. I will.
My king, your friendship is the highest boon
God's earth could give.

Rufus. 'Tis yours.

Albano. Behold how good
And joyful is the union of twain
In brotherly affection. Peace to all.

[*Excunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Borders of the New Forest. Enter Beowulf and a crowd of Peasants.*

1st Peasant. Still they afforest, still they take our land ;
They tax us into hunger, and our bread
Is in the purse of gold for Normandy.

2nd Peasant. Father, the land is ours ?

Beowulf. The land is his
Who finds in it himself—his toil, his time,
His hope, his sweat, his sorrow.

1st Peasant. So he prates.
I'm sick to death.

3rd Peasant. A tombstone of a man !
He comforts with big words and prophecies,
And thinks he fools our misery. Because
His bonnie eyes of English blue were charred,
We put our faith in him. He's dark as night,
No cheer nor meaning in him.

1st Peasant. And no aid
For famine-stricken mouths.

2nd Peasant. The Ætheling
Will have some heart to help us.

1st Peasant. Michael's Mount
Held him in prison. Now he rides the woods
With the king's troop and keeps him company :
Who loves him loves us not. There is no hope.

Beowulf. Wait without hope. I wait till this mute dark
Numbers its doomful hours. No tender fall

Of light will dissipate its dull excess ;
 'Twill break up in the imbecility,
 Confusion, undiscernment of the grave.
 So will my blindness end ; I have no hope,
 I suffer. . . Hope's a maggot eats the heart
 From the stout timbers of endurance. Starve.

[*Enter Old Man: in the distance Officers measuring the land with ropes.*]

2nd Peasant. There are the officers. Let's bring him
 word

What they are marking off. If it's the land
 They're hurting . . .

3rd Peasant. Ay, he says the Earth's himself,
 He put his flesh and blood in't, just as if
 He'd dug a grave within it for his child. [*They go apart.*]

Old Man. It's sore to see him ; he stands like a tree
 Infect with autumn. I will speak with him.
 [*To Beowulf.*] Art thinking of the grave?

Beowulf. Why, man, your voice
 Minds of the russet-apples that I stole
 With Edgar in the orchard. Are you he?

Old Man. Ay, ay, your ancient play-mate. Beowulf
 I fear you're clouded by these ominous
 Murmurs and threats, and in your suffering
 Sigh for the humble strewings of a grave.

Beowulf. I'm not impatient ; if by rotting down
 One might break earth of her sterility ! . . .
 As for the rich they're misers of their mould ;
 No crumb of their corruption will they fling
 The famished earth.

Old Man. Nay, nay, you're with the worms !
 There are tombs clean and dry, though a poor man
 May not inhabit such, the thought of them
 Is pleasant ; they are strong and quaintly cut.
 One may lie there
 With all one's bravery. 'Tis even said
 The moth doth not corrupt. Could a man dwell

In such a tomb till resurrection-morn
He were lodged peacefully.

Beowulf. I will not rise ;
I'm used now to the dark ; a flare of saints
Would hurt me like the scorch of the hot brass
That withered up my sight.

Old Man. Be comforted.
The Lord will judge the tyrant.

Beowulf. How you talk !
Do you think the Earth's a thing that makes your flesh
Soft for the worms ?—the harvests lie asleep
Upon her bosom ; she has reared the spring ;
The seasons are her change of countenance ;
She lives ; and now for many thousand years
Hath ruled the toiling and the rest of men.
There's none like her for judging the true way,
Quick'ning the weeds, setting the twitch to work,
Or blasting with sterility : she'll judge.

Old Man. In sooth there have been prodigies and
dreams.

I have had one most marvellous ; methought
As I was fishing in the Stour, the tide
Grew ruddy, and the milky placid stream
Heaved turbulent, while in my weighty net
Smirk'd finny demons ; but I drew the haul,
Crossing myself, untrembling to the shore.
Eh, eh ! I drowned the devils with the sign.
Yet verily these portents show the earth
And sea and sky are must'ring for a curse.
You do not mis-interpret.

[*Re-enter Peasants.*]

1st Peasant. All is gone.
My little plot, my home ; they'll turn it all
To forest for the king.

3rd Peasant. And what is left
To till is taxed where plough can never reach,
And spade were choked with furze.

2nd Peasant. We'll beat them off.
An' teach them they're not hunting deer to-day,
But men with staves and children.

1st Peasant. Beat them down !
[*Exeunt in tumult.*]

Old Man. He's sicklied as he were about to die ;
The still-born curses hang upon his lips ;
Yet I believe he's praying. Beowulf,
Do thou make known this matter to the Lord ;
He will avenge.

Beowulf. The Lord ! Oh, He's above !
There's something lying at the roots of things
I burrow for.

Old Man. Good brother, one is down
In the encounter and they beckon me.
Think on your sins, for I must succour him,
And by the pallor of your face I judge
Your end is come.

[*Exit.*]

Beowulf [*supporting himself against a rock-bound oak*]. O
mighty in resource,
Earth, wilt thou suffer loss of liberty
Unquivering ? *A rope about the land !*

[*A noise heard: the Officers advance.*]

1st Officer. Make way, you blundering lout.

2nd Officer. Oh, he's a stump,
Let him be bound'ry ! Trail the cord along.
Measure from this blind peasant to yon oak
Ten rods. [*Looking at Beowulf.*] He's unresistent.

Beowulf [*clasping the rock*]. Oh, revenge !

SCENE II.—*A Room. Enter Flambard with a letter.*

Flambard. This from my mother. [*Reads.*] " I am pelted,
stoned,
Hooted, bedraggled, cursed at for a witch.
Save me, sweet Ralf, bid me come over seas ;
Under my son's protection I am safe :

But here in Bayeux, naked, sorrowful,
 I creep about the corners of the streets,
 And spit upon the Christians like a Jew
 From my dark covert."—Ah ! the evil eye,
 The malice of the woman ! Very like
 • She is a witch. The devil certainly
 Is my true sire.

[*Enter Messenger.*]

Messenger. So please you, she entreats
 For money, and due escort, till she touch
 The land where she may safely walk abroad ;
 Since by the terror of your name men's tongues
 Wag circumspectly—this she urged me add,
 Fearful the penman had not set her plaint
 As eloquent as from her tingling lips
 It issued voluble.

Flambard [*giving a paper*]. Despatch. I send
 This paper and these bags. Looked she in health
 When she dictated this ? I know her way,—
 Her speech warmed at the embers of her eyes,
 She never paused till bursting in a laugh
 To see the scribe with tortoise, toiling hand
 A-cramp to copy all. [*Exit Messenger.*] She's given me
 My ready tongue. How should a man serve God
 By his fine wit ? God has no work for him ;
 Whereas the devil turns to good account
 All lies, concupiscence, and avarice.
 He keeps the brain at labour all the day :
 I like employment ; haply in my age
 I may take lighter service.

[*Enter William Rufus.*]

Rufus.

Serious !

Now by my mother's soul——

Flambard.

Most opportune

The oath ; both you and I are filial :
 We can't forget the look in parents' eyes,
 The victor's triumph and the miser's lust

Softened to such a human coveting
As empties the brimmed coffers of the eyes——

Rufus. True, my fair Chancellor. I can't forget
The Mora bore a figure-head, a boy
Vermilion-cheeked, with clust'ring golden hair.
My father held me up to look at him ;
His kiss rubbed harsh against my pouting lips
Agape in wonder, frightening me,—I screamed
And kicked, but heard him whisper, pressing close,
"This the man-child upon whose head I fix
The English royalties—a stalwart son !"
Ralf, my ambition ripens ; 'tis harvest-time ;
The Conqueror's prophecy must be fulfilled,
Surpassed ;—accomplishment exceed presage.
I must have all becomes an emperor—
Wealth, vassals, territory to the steep
Of mountain ramparts inaccessible ;
Where with the pasture fails the shepherd's flock,
Be first my name unfrequent. Solitude
Ridge my supremacy. How grows the gold ?
I must be prodigal ; my nature sweats
Munificence ; 'tis healthy to perspire.
Come now, let's look into thy register.

Flambard. Sire, it exceeds belief how priests will rob
The churches, melt the consecrated gold,
Expose the saint a sham'd penitent
Stripped to the shirt, and from the skeleton
Pluck the loose, dusty ring : they have no awe,
And the revenue waxes.

Rufus. Hoo, hoo, hoo ! [*Throwing money on the table.*
A bellyful of laughter ! Thirty marks
I cast down on this table, as my mite
Toward the ten thousand owed for Normandy.
How thinkest thou I earned them ?

Flambard. Honestly ?
Nay, but by pious subterfuge.

Rufus. A Jew

Came to me weeping o'er his recreant lad,
 Subtle St. Stephen drove to baptism,
 As Christ the swine to perish in the sea.
 Would I command the convert to abjure
 (Here shook the knave his lusty money bags),
 He would show gr—ratitude. So I professed
 Compassion, fronted the rebellious boy,
 And darted on him such a fiery look
 As half-fulfilled my threat to rend his eyes.
 He feigned to think I jested. My shrewd Ralf,
 The youth was shameless in his piety,
 And would not be abashed. But afterward
 I claimed, as payment of my royal pains,
 Half the fore-promised fee ; and Abraham,
 With his lost child, lost gold, lost impudence,
 Turned stubborn on his heel.

Flambard. Sire, I predict
 The heavy Anselm will resign his staff,
 So groans he at the vast extortion
 Of the oppressèd Church. If he retire
 And leave you wolfish pastor of the flock——

[*Enter Anselm unseen at a distance.*]

Anselm [aside]. Alas ! I'm tired in soul, and for the south
 I pine to death as winter-stricken bird ;
 There is the pain of thwarted wings within
 The care-barred prison of my cònfined brain.
 Oh, I must fly to Rome, where comfort, rest,
 And light would fall as summer on my grief.

Rufus. Anselm ! The name offends me. He hath lost
 My Welsh campaign. The pious gentlemen,
 His duteous addition to my ranks,
 Took field more like the drooping garrison
 Of a surrendered city than a troop
 Of knights, fresh, emulous, and fair-disposed.
 His sheep are for the slaughter.

Anselm. True, my lord.
 They have a deathly look ; their means of life

Is swallowed by your officers ; their blood
Is shed with their last coins.

Rufus. Shut up your jaws !

Anselm. My lord, I come—

Rufus. The rot consume your sheep

Anselm. To ask a favour for myself.

Rufus. For you ?

Anselm. That I may journey for a little space
To Rome—the shrine of comfort raised aloft
On seven-pillared hills. My native skies
Have lately dyed my memory. I long
For cloudless sun and heaven-tinctured peace.
My spirit fails for counsel and relief
Of holy love and guidance fatherly.
Thought leaves me, and the level mists of life
Envelop vision and distort all truth,
Till I am lost and weary.

Rufus. Am I mad ?

Look I insane ? No, by my mother's soul,
You shall not leave my billow-guarded shore.
No, no, good father. Have you done a deed
So black and deadly that the Pope alone
Can give you absolution ? By God's face,
I never will believe it. Would you ask
The Pope for counsel ? You might give him such
With far more fitness than receive 't of him.
You have no need to go.

Anselm. All pow'r is yours,
And as you will you speak. Another day
What you refused you royally may grant.
I'll multiply my pray'rs.—And patience rule
The fever of my soul.

[*Exit.*

Rufus. Ho, ho ! Well heard.
Ay, now he's sick and shall be penitent.
How I will taunt him ! Sick of hearing bleat
His hungry lambs, he's off to quiet feed
On the green pastures of the Roman slope.

I will be bitter. Go you after him,
 Say his petition has much moved the king,
 Who threatens worse oppression. *[Exit Flambard.]*

It is odd ;

I plague this saint and cannot part with him.
 The company of fiends is tedious ;
 One must have something holy to torment,
 And—and . . . if fever struck me down again,
 I should have hunger for the face of God,
 Though it should damn me. He's a remedy
 Not to be loosed from hand. I'll make him smart. *[Exit.]*

SCENE III.—*Winchester : a Street, leading to the Council Chamber. At the door a crowd of Townsfolk. Enter Purkis, with a cart laden with apples, accompanied by Godric.*

Purkis. So now they think the world's whole business is being settled within four walls. And they stand gaping—never see it's the harvest, and the harvest-men who break the ground and build fuel that determine things. Can't you gape at me ? I'm the charcoal-burner ; 'twas a trade before that of the bishop or the tax-gatherer, and is likely to continue, though my Lord Anselm show his whims.

1st Citizen. It is come to Council ; 'tis the great event.

Purkis. Ay, whether the Archbishop may take a holiday in Rome.

2nd Citizen. Oh, the bishops are with the king, and most of us townsfolk in a wonder one of so gentle a disposition as our Lord of Canterbury should grow restless for his pleasure, while the people endure the bitter onslaughts of calamity. Whom have you here ?

Purkis. Why the good canon Godric, my brother. But my lord of Twynham liked not the fashion of his piety, soon as he found his purse needed endowment. Out he whips him, tumbles over the stones of the old church, and now is himself dean, patron, architect, and most marvellous mendicant in one.

1st Citizen. Ay, the men of God are mightily abused. Good father, we hope to see you righted.

Purkis. There's my boy Wilfrith, never watching the crowd, stuffing his eyes in at the keyhole. So monks and priests misinterpret. All a pothor if there's blight on the rose-tree: the smut o' the corn-field never strikes 'em. Well, Wilfrith, what brings *you* from Twynham?

Wilfrith. Love of the holy man we fear to lose.

Godric. You have rightly marked him—yet if he fleer at the king's authority he must be punished. He must be an Englishman with the rest of us, drink the air of custom, or as a foreigner he'll suffer our misliking.

2nd Citizen. He's for the Pope.

3rd Citizen. He's just for his own ease. He's fleeing away from us, as a woman flees from her man when he catches her lad by the shoulders, with a rod in his other hand. She hasn't strength to resist him, nor pity to stay dress the blue stripes of her beaten brat. She'll just to a neighbour's and recover.

2nd Citizen. For my part I think it's no more than a lunacy. When we're mazed we always want to go back to where we came from. It's natural. But I doubt whether anything turns out well, tried over again. The meat may be the same, but there's age in the appetite.

Purkis. Right, man; blue skies are excellent; one leaves them, has the heart-ache and returns for cure to stare heavenward. Our blessings are rarely our remedies. It takes something medicinal in the way of sorrow to restore us.

Wilfrith. Father, hush!

Here comes good brother Baldwin full of news.

[*Enter Baldwin from within the Council-chamber.*]

Baldwin. They have deserted him, he stands alone.
His bishops whom he gently did adjure,
Choked by the cares of kinship, and the sweet
Flesh-woven bands of this entangling world,
Refuse to pass beyond the fealty
Owed to the king.

2nd Citizen. Good, good !

Wilfrith. But the Archbishop will be firm ?

Baldwin. A martyr's constancy is in his eyes,
And a confessor's cheerfulness. He sends
Word to the king that he will cleave to God.
Soon as the messengers again assail
His weary ears, I will return to you.
Meanwhile, pray for him.

[*Exit.*

Wilfrith. That he may be firm. [*Kneels apart.*

Purkis. Now, la ! at a crisis what's the use of one's knees.
Muster your wits, man, and leave mumbling. If Father
Anselm need a holiday, he should come down to our play-
ground, see the king at his royal sports. Oh, it's merry in
the greenwood, and dad roaring like a lion when the officers
come near his lair. I should like the Archbishop to encounter
him. He's disordered, past my management.

3rd Citizen. He's grown infirm.

Purkis. Ay, but not silly, like a dotard—does too many
things in 's mind at once, and then sits idle like a huswife in
the midst.

4th Citizen. I mind me of old Beowulf, the lad
Who would sit throwing stones into the pond ;
We shied them at the birds, the rest of us,
And laughed that all he cared for was to see
The circles on the water grow and spread
All day; by rights he should ha' minded sheep.

3rd Citizen. Well, I can't picture him growing peevish
and old. Seemed to me he had senses hidden in himself, as
a miser a bag of gold beyond reach. I warrant he'll not sit
by the fire and wheeze till bed-time. He's ne'er known the
ague.

Purkis. No: he's not the litter of age—infirmities.
Godric, that boy [*pointing to Wilfrith*] can give you tidings
of your absence. How fares it? Is it made much of, or
slighted?

Wilfrith. We are full of hope,
Dear uncle, you will be restored to us ;

For, since the Bishop of St. Calais pined,
 Sickened, and died, our restless overseer
 Grows discontented with his deanery,
 Neglects to thwart the canons, and repines
 Our Church should exercise so slenderly
 Pow'rs of design that for expression need
 The wealth and domination of a see.
 All this is from his mouth ; the brethren smile
 And nodding whisper, " Fiery Flambard builds,
 But we shall have our dean to consecrate
 The beautiful new minster."

Godric. Can it be
 The bishopric of Durham shall be seized
 At the king's private pleasure as a boon
 To Flambard ?

Purkis. Fortune, imitating Providence, misplants her
 crops that all in the soil of circumstance may receive the
 discipline of adversity. This holy man, who in Normandy
 grew like a watered oak, must now look for his aliment from
 the heavens. English earth is too impoverished for his
 nurture.

Wilfrith. Oh, father, by his ghostly help he cheered
 St. Calais, who so deeply wounded him.
 Each living creature he includes in love ;
 England in him will lose the advocate,
 The single righteous man, who might prevail
 To stay the must'ring vengeance of the Lord.

Purkis. And dost thou love thy country ?

Wilfrith. Ay, the souls
 It breeds for hell and heaven.

Purkis [to *Godric*]. Brother, you ?

Godric. Sooth, I love it for what is not, the old worship
 and the old ways—the Saxon Church.

Purkis. Dad, I think, loves it corporeally, for the very
 mould's sake ; while I never fret till the babies pule and the
 young lasses wear the brows of widows. That enrages me.
 Anything unnatural in the seasons of life : Youth uncom-

plaining ; Age unquerulous ; women too weary-like to use courtesy to their dead ; and the only strange thing happening, an encounter with the devil.

[*Re-enter Baldwin.*]

Baldwin. Dear brethren, list ! a joy is in his eyes ;
He hears that he may go : the harsh reserve
And grasping petty rancour of the king
That will condemn him to trudge penniless,
He doth not hear : his cheek already glows
Ardent, as with the sun of Italy
Sooth-tinctured.

3rd Citizen. The good bishop—he will flee ?
How said the brother ?

Godric. Let us be resigned.
The king will have his way with us, extort
Till life is drained away from us : of men
There will be dearth for slaughter.

Wilfrith. Our last hope
Is gone.

Purkis. Nay, lad, look cheerily ; God 's everywhere about.
The priest may frighten the crows from the harvest ; it's the
Husbandman knows what He put in the ground and what
will come out. Let the Italian back to his blue skies !
things will settle, if we've patience.

SCENE IV.—*Within the Council-hall. The outer chamber.*
Anselm and Eadmer.

Anselm. Edmer, that I should not appeal to Rome,
They ask *this* of me ? I appeal to God
To guide me to the threshold of His saints.
I must away. . . . It is an agony
That urges me. I must behold the face
Of Christ's great soldier, hear of holy wars.
It is insufferable I should be fined
For sorry trim and escort of my troops,
Or bear reproach from any over-lord

Save Him who may most righteously complain
That I have wronged Him in my negligence.

Eadmer. How bitterly you weep !—sevenfold your grief
Like the dear Mother's.

Anselm. I must flee the world ;
Necessity is on me. I will start
Barefoot and naked to the holy hills,
A penitent, and pray for my own peace.

Eadmer. The flock, my father, the unsheltered souls ?

Anselm. O Eadmer, I went lonely as a child
To pour my angry heart out unto Heaven,
And the Lord smiled, and set me down to feast
Who paused not by the idling harvesters.
I must complain to Him.

Eadmer. 'Tis marvellous.
You speak of Rome as 'twere Jerusalem.

Anselm. There God hath left His shadow upon earth ;
There is the Bride, the Church ; there shall I hear
The Bridegroom's voice delighting over her ;
There is the door to the warm-breathing fold,
The Shepherd's blessing, and the pasture's peace.

Eadmer. Dear master, I am eager to be gone.

Anselm. Nay, but the pang and the extremity,
The joy that is too much.

[*Enter Messenger.*]

Messenger. My lord, the king
Conveys his pleasure thus :—

Anselm. My will is fixed ;
I cleave to God.

Messenger. He graciously allows
You leave his kingdom ; in eleven days
Be ready at the haven to receive
A messenger, who duly shall provide
You and your escort for the pilgrimage.

Eadmer. Then shall we onward ? You are sick at heart,
Home-sick for holiness : you languish here.
We'll straightway to our quarters, and be glad

In happy preparation.

Anselm [to Messenger, pointing to inner chamber]. Is he there,

The king? . . .

Messenger. The audience is broken up ;
The bishops and the courtiers intermix,
And, past the boundary of our monarch's ears,
Lament the land's bereavement.

Anselm. But the king?

Messenger. He is not wrathful ; he sits moodily
And meditates beside your grace's chair
Without an oath or gesture. I ne'er saw
His busy face so still.

Anselm. Edmer—O God,
Why dost Thou set my love upon the damned ?
Do not I nightly wrestle for the soul
Of Osbern, my beloved ? Now in mine age
Must I take on my heart the infamies
Of this blasphemer ? [To Messenger.] I will speak with him.
[Aside.] Alas ! how oft
He hath broke in upon my happy hours
Of contemplation ! Can it be, in Rome
I shall forget him ? I will say farewell.

[He signs to the Messenger to conduct him to the King. A curtain is drawn back, an inner chamber discovered
The King on a throne ; a vacant chair beside him.
At some distance the retiring Bishops and Courtiers
are seen conversing.

Rufus [after a long pause]. He shall be banished ; from
this holy man

I will break loose. God is but poorly served
In His omnipotence. His hirelings flee
Being a-hired, and care not for the flock.
I and the devil in duality
Will sceptre England, haply Rome itself,
And mock this Anselm with his scallop-shell
I'll gird him now. He hath stood over me

(My neck beneath his foot) we have changed place ;
 He shall make restitution and amends
 For this annoyance and the sorry aid
 He furnished me ; and I will banish him. . . .
 True, his dove's spirit lay among the pots
 Of my foul nature, and ne'er soiled her plumes.
 I liked to feel him close : now in his stead
 I'll plant Beelzebub. [*To his Clerk.*] You, William, there,
 Meet the Archbishop at the water's marge ;
 Search well his baggage : let the crowd look on ;
 Expose the treasons of the runaway.
 [*Aside.*] This empty chair . . .

[*Enter Anselm, followed by Eadmer.*]

Anselm. My liege, I'm starting ; if with your good will
 It had been better ; even as it is,
 I cannot part from love of your soul's health ;
 And now as ghostly father to his son,
 As Anselm to the king, beseech you take
 My blessing.

Rufus. Father, I refuse it not.

[*Anselm silently makes the sign of the cross
 over the King, and blesses him.*]

Anselm [to Eadmer]. Come, Edmer, we are pilgrims, and
 my shell

Is my own yearning heart. [*Exit with Eadmer.*]

Rufus. Now he is gone. . . .

What ! my eyes wet ? I warrant he shall weep
 He ever left me. [*To Clerk.*] William, you are slack ;
 Turn o'er his goods ; and we will b—b—banish him.

[*Exit Walter ; the King buries his face in his hands.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The New Forest. Beowulf (restlessly pacing to and fro). Enter Purkis.*

Purkis [aside]. There's alteration in the face. His brow,
That had the quiet of a leaguered town,
Growing a little stiller day by day,
Is now a blaze of sortie and assault.

[Aloud.] Why, dad, you're looking busy ; what new scheme
Are you hatching ? Is your sight come back again ?

Beowulf [pulling down a bough of acorns]. One fell down
on my head ; they're growing ripe.

Where is the king ? Does he have quiet rest ?

Purkis. Don't shake like a conspirator.

Beowulf. It's come ;
It's at the doors, and I must witness it.
I was at Senlac. Look you well about—
I must not miss it ; I must see him fall ;
I saw King Harold.

Purkis. Well-a—well-a-day !
We'll to the show and you shall lead me on,
Unfold me how the players gib and mince :
You are the seeing man.

Beowulf. Let's walk about.
What is the time of day ?—The August gules . . .

Purkis. You're mixing things.

Beowulf. What was it that I wrought ?
We must not one be idle. I must help.—
I'm young again : my boy, it's coming back,

My sight is coming—at the set of sun.

Purkis. This is fresh prodigy ; he's radiant.
There's very twinkle in the leaden sky
Of his old eyes ; but let them out of cell,
He'll be a maniac.—Come, come, to-bed !

Beowulf. I'll sleep when it is dark ; it's shining now,
And I must watch. I am a sentinel ;—
Ay, that's the word ; all things are pressing back.
A watch ; they chose me for my piercing sight
By the hoar apple-tree . . . I built the fence.
Where is the place ? I can't see clearly yet.
Let's feel the trunk.

Purkis. It's supernatural.
I'll haul him to the oak : he's riveted
To this one bark.—We will encamp here, dad.

Beowulf. There's a great prospect, even over sea.
Ay, it stands well.

Purkis. One looks to Pevensey ;
The sea is glist'ring.—Now he's dulled again.

Beowulf. Another time ; that was another day.
It's overspread with leaves—a better light,
And not too dazzling. I will guard the wood.

SCENE II.—*Twynham. The Church completed. Enter*
Leofric, meeting Old Man.

Old Man. Ah, sir, your face is full of happiness ;
But should they knock that down [*pointing to the tower*]
like the old church ?

Leofric. Nay, when a mother sees her perfect babe,
She thinks not of the doomed calamity
To strike his hoary head. Come now, confess
It is a goodly pile.

Old Man. Ay, a fair heap
Of masonry. Young man, you've done your best ;
I'll not deny it—and the rest is slow.
God and the winds must care for it ; it needs
To be thick-planted with the dead before

It will look old enough for worshippers.
 The Lord Himself, they say, will make all new ;—
 I marvel at Him ; but He's fit to judge.—
 Our forefathers lay still ; men had good thoughts
 In the old place : it seemed a heathen thing
 To hack it up.

Leofric. Nay, it was rough and plain ;
 Not better than a homestead.

Old Man. Well, you see
 God had been there ; He did a deal for it.
You rumbled up the dead. When there's more graves
 It will be better. I shall make one soon.
 You must not think, young man, you do it all.
We do our part just rotting in the ground ;
 The saucy urchins feel it's wonderful ;
 We frighten 'em. I do not think the walls
 Do much ; it's what's outside and what is in,
 Plenty of living sorrow and a Past,
 Makes one look up.—You will excuse me, sir,—
 There's a little girl I buried years ago
 Here, where the nettles press. I let it be
 While they were building ; now I'll put it right ;
 That's what I'm come for. It is difficult ;
 The weeds so intermix.

Leofric. We'll find it out.
 You have no headstone : I will carve you one,
 If you would care. Then you will not mistake.

Old Man. My little lass was shy of strangers, hid
 Behind the chair, if they but looked at her.
 I'll keep her to myself.

[*Disappears.*]

Leofric. It's useless toil.
 The people come here to reclaim their dead,
 Or just to mass.

[*Enter Flambard.*]

Flambard. Good even, Leofric.
 Fair news, my cunning craftsman, do you hear ?
 Your uncle Godric I will reinstate,

And all—except the beauty of this church—
 Wear its old form. Nay more, my bonnie lad—
 I am translated to a northern See ;
 And, hark ye ! good St. Calais brought him plans
 From Normandy, by which we'll raise a church ;
 Ay, Leofric, a dominant, dark pile,
 That shall express the State's stability,
 And keep the fortress in its very mould ;
 A mighty, militant, majestic mass.
 You shall notch out the saint, the populace
 Outside, the grinning devil and vile beast,
 Who sets his paw-mark on the simpleton
 Living for this world's praise.—I'm altering,
 My Leofric ; Zaccheus from the fig
 Came down at summons and restored his gain,
 Ill-gotten, to the poor. I will provide
 Good hospitable lodging for the Lord,
 And you shall furnish it with ornament.

Leofric. There is no joy . . . oh, my lips fail like
 tools

Blunt-edged ; I cannot carve the words I would.
 This sudden surety of a noble toil,
 Not unimmortal like the labourer's,
 Good as the earth to the Creator's eyes,
 And excellent as nature unto man,
 Is better to me than a promised wealth,
 More even than a marriage.

Flambard. [*looking at Leofric*] Ah, to say
 Let there be summer in a human face,
 And straightway there is summer, gives a man,
 In sooth, an inkling of omnipotence
 Not to be scorned. Here comes a malcontent.

[*Enter Wilfrith.*]

I ever shunned such ; you may deal with him ;
 Cheer him with my departure. Leofric !

[*Aside.*] He's lost. How happy are these artists—well ! [*Exit.*]

Leofric. A minster-church, a pile to block the air,

And throw steep shadows on the tiny roofs ;
It's built now. I behold it.

Wilfrith. Leofric,
I had a dream, a cruel, ghastly dream,
An apparition. I must see the king.

Leofric. What ails you?

Wilfrith. God will bring deliverance,
And yet by fearful means. The instrument . . .
But what has happened? You have surely seen
A comfortable vision, for your eyes
Look as they never more could shed salt tears.
Give me your message.

Leofric. Wilfrith, you are scared.
Listen, good uncle Godric is restored,
And dear routine will give you back the health
That days uneven agitate.

Wilfrith. The king—
You do not seem to care—deliverance ;
We shall be free.

Leofric. The devil gave you dreams,
And in imagination you are bond.
What want you with the king? At Malwood Lodge
He earns his daily feast of venison.
Let be, and listen to my saner news :
Flambard is Durham's bishop, and I go
To build—

Wilfrith. What boots it I am hounded on
Of fiends? I cannot tell what it portends,
I am distracted; but you have your art—
It's nothing to you.

Leofric. Wilfrith, it is less
To be possessed of devils that are dumb,
Than dwell the mate of undelivered power,
A stricken thing divine, another self,
Kingly and crippled as great David's son.

Wilfrith. All that is fantasy ; these fearful dreams
Are real. Yet, if England in his death

Gain freedom—

Leofric. It's the spirit that is free.
 Wilfrith, you cannot know, when first I took
 These logs of wood and stared at them, it was
 As God Himself lay captive at my heart,
 And I must burst His withes and worship Him,
 His jailer, who could give Him prison-bread,
 Not liberty. I perished in His chains :
 I could not speak ;—now He has utterance,
 And all my nature subjugate to joy
 Of His authority, I am at peace.
 You have religion ; let it make you bold
 To bear the strange convulsions of the world.
 Be happy in your consecrated thoughts ;
 Look on the church ; in its vicinity
 You shall spend blameless years, till 'neath its stones
 You sleep in death's immured tranquillity.

Wilfrith. No, no. I'll to the king to save his soul. [*Exit.*

Leofric. And I'll to Durham to my lattice-work. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Castle Malwood. The King's Chamber.*

Rufus [*starting from sleep*]. Maria ! Light ! Help, help !
 [*Enter Chamberlains.*]

1st Chamberlain. A fearful cry !
 My lord, what is 't ?

2nd Chamberlain. His eyes like shooting-stars
 Blaze all about.

1st Chamberlain. And dew is on his brow.
 Speak, speak ! My lord !

Rufus. Bring me the candle, close—
 Near, near !

1st Chamberlain. 'Twill fire the bed.

Rufus. There hangs my cloak—
 My hunting horn. And who are ye, black louts ?
 Those yonder are my boots ? I must have dreamt ;
 Nearer, the light !—the comfortable light,

The earthly light, the light that shows me life.
And who are you?

2nd Chamberlain. Your faithful chamberlains.

Rufus. Show me your faces ; they are dim and red.—
My dreams are bloody.—Ha ! your pimpled nose
And your slant eye-lid, I have known them ere
I went to sleep. You are my chamberlains,
My common servants, born as other men,
And subject to like terrors with myself ;
So do not leave me. Sit on either side,
And watch my pillow. Varlets, if you stir
Your haunches from each side of me, the day
Shall never dawn for either.

1st Chamberlain. We will stay.

Rufus. Hath the cock crowed ? Ay ! now his throat's at
work.

You'll never hear that when your blood is shed ;
'Tis of the earth and waking to the sun ;
There is no clarion of judgment in 't.

1st Chamberlain. A pleasant household noise ! The day
is near ;
She's melting the cold east.

2nd Chamberlain. And shadows wane
How fares my liege ?

Rufus. It was a sleep diseased.
I'm well.—This heart is full, and yet they drew
Medicinal red drops ; they bled me, and—
Snuff the light, villains ! Do you see, 'tis dull,
And ruddily the flame's obscured ! Now sit—
For as they bled me, lo ! my blood gushed up
To Heaven and put out the light of day.—
Maria !

2nd Chamberlain. O my lord !—he calls again.
There is damnation in his face.

Rufus. Look, look !
Out through the window is my blood, it glows
Across the sky, incarnadines the clouds,

And there is day behind it. Red, red, red !
Gules ! Oh, blood-red !

1st Chamberlain. It is the sunrise.

Rufus. No !—

Is my heart rushing out ?

2nd Chamberlain. My lord, my lord !

Thus daylight comes. You've heard of rosy morn ?
'Tis here. Indeed, the colour of the sun
Envermeils all the east.

Rufus. Not mine, not mine ?

It renders me my dream.

1st Chamberlain. Yea, like the sun

You'll lift on high the scarlet of your reign,
That it will clothe the Heavens with its pride
And quite outdo yon Phœbus.

2nd Chamberlain. So I think.

Such my interpretation of your dream.

Rufus. Ha, ha ! you teach me reason. From my heart
The ruby stream of empire shall expand
Until it dyes the vision of the world
With glory yet beyond.—I'll raise myself.
Ah ! now I see the tree-tops, dingy, dun,
With just a spot of foliage down there
That's lurid with high blush from off the sky.
It's earth, familiar outlook, just the wood
Where I shall hunt to-day ; I'll lie and rest ;
I have a heavy head-ache. Who comes here ?
Hamon !

[*Enter Robert Fitz-hamon.*]

Fitz-hamon. Good day. You have a haggard look ;
I fear that sleep hath been unmerciful,
As all soft wantons can be.

Rufus. I have dreamt,
Have been appalled and shaken by a spark,
Until I called it doomsday.

Fitz-hamon. Very strange.
Dreams multiply. Did aught of death invade

Your slumbers?

Rufus. Ay, such hovered through the fog
Like Jack-o'-lantern. But these cunning knaves
(As nimble Joseph cheered the Court of Nile)
Make me a merry prophet.

Fitz-hamon. Pray you, keep
From hunting in the forest. There's a load
This morning on my spirits.

Rufus. It is hot ;
And August weather makes a fool of you.

[*Enter the Ætheling Henry.*]

Well, Harry, shall we hunt?

Ætheling Henry. So please you, yes.

Fitz-hamon. I pray him not—for portents are about,
And I have waked uneasy.

Ætheling Henry. Do not, then.
If Cræsus had attended to his dream
(The golden king of Lydia), he ne'er
Had lost his son, the hunter, from the dart
Of the young man's own friend.

Rufus. Now none of that,
Your clerkly nonsense, Harry. Ay, we'll hunt,
But after meat. The fore-noon we'll devote
To business, for I plan a march to Rome.
I'll go where Anselm journeys—not with scrip,
But ringing shield, no staff, but ready spear.
Bring me cold water—I must freeze my head
To have it cool for projects ! 'Tis full day.
Harry, the sun is after you, I'll swear
You stand a man of gold.—Get out, I'll dress. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Castle Malwood. The Banqueting-hall.*
Enter Servants with dishes.

1st Servant. The feast is ready. Flagons glow with wine
Hotter than summer's veins.

2nd Servant. The steam of joints
Is dense across the breath of basking noon.

The feasters come.

3rd Servant. Hast noted how the king
Falls into silence after each brave speech,
And is so noisy certain that he'll hunt
Before the day is out?

1st Servant. Yet puts it off,
And plunges into business recklessly.

2nd Servant. The chamberlains at cock-crow heard him
call

The Holy Name.

1st Servant. I'll swear he never did ;
He scoffs at all religion.

2nd Servant. Ay, my son,
A mocker is a mendicant at pinch.

[*Enter the King, the Ætheling Henry, Walter Tirel,
Robert Fitz-hamon, William of Breteuil, and others.*]

Rufus. A goodly meal,
A fat repast. Be seated, gentlemen.
My hearty Tirel, lean you to my right,
I'll have you served with primest venison ;
For, gentlemen—be patient with my freak,
It is not worth your jealousy, good lads—
I'm smitten with this Tirel, and my love
Must have him near, at meat and in the chase.
For ere the sun is slanting through the glades,
And taming with its soft decline the brutes
That range these woods, we'll hunt——

Tirel. We will, we will !
I'll bring to earth rich quarry.

Rufus. So thou shalt.—
I wish I did not love thee.—[*To Attendants.*] Serve him well.
Drink, pot-companions, to my sovereignty.
I'll hold my court at Poitiers next Yule.
The Hall I've built at Westminster is nought,—
A pigmy temple for my empire's shrine.
Drink, compeers, to our revels in the south,
Where Christmas shall be hot as is to-day.

A rouse ! Lift up thy cup, thou fool of France.

Ætheling Henry. Is Walter tame with this blank airless
noon,

Or will he flash retort ?

Tirel. Talk, talk, all talk !

The way is clear. Breton and Angevin
Bow to his sway, and yet he nothing does
But wag his forward tongue.

Rufus. Ho ! saucy mate !

We'll be across the Alps and back again
Before our belfries ring the old year out.

Tirel. If ever they submit to English rule,
An evil death may every Frenchman die !

Ætheling Henry. A patriot ! He's flame and vinegar.
Drink to our merry sport. These beechen glades
And golden mossy plots, where shadows lie
Asleep like satyrs, will be exquisite
In mellow warmth of sun-down ere we start.

Fitz-hamon [to the King]. You still incline to hunting ?

Rufus. Hunt I will.

My brain is dull and clotted with affairs ;
The evening will be cool.

Tirel. Oh, very cold.

Rufus. Why say you so ?

Tirel. Sooth, as a flatterer

I magnify your language, for you prate
Like a big tyrant. You say cool—I, cold.

Rufus. My bosom-friend !

[*Enter Wilfrith.*]

Breteuil. Who's here ? A staring monk,
With sooty rings about his fevered eyes ?

Wilfrith. Where is the king ?

Breteuil. He crowns the feast up there.

Rufus. More venison, you niggards ! Wine, I say !
I will not hunt till I am full of meat,
And jocund with the madding blood of grapes.
Pour ! serve !—I pledge you, Walter.

Tirel.

In red wine

I challenge you.

Breteuil. This monk has had a dream.

Rufus [aside]. Cursed be these visions and these haunting sights

That fool my health to qualms. Let's hear this trance.

We have no jester at the feast to-day.

We will make merry with this cowed buffoon.

Wilfrith [to the King]. Hither, my lord, I've travelled through the sun

To reach your living feet and hold them back

From the dark threshold of your coming doom.

I saw the throne of Judgment, and the night

Flared to annihilation, while the beams

Of moonlight gathered round a kneeling form,

A woman, lily-vestured, sad and white,

The Church that grieved most sorely to her Lord.

I looked and saw a coal-black figure rise,

With grizzly raiment, scintillating darts—

A man, the swarthy witness to his forge.

One shaft the mystic Hand omnipotent

Took, turned, and pointed earthwards.—Oh, my lord,

The bow is bent.

Rufus. Ho, ho ! He is a monk.

Monk-like, he dreams for money. Give him coins—

A hundred shillings.

Wilfrith. O my lord, my lord . . .

I will not take a penny for my pains.

Only believe my words.

Oh, look not on me with hot merry face

That Death may strike to stone and kill with cold

At any wretched moment. [*Enter a Smith.*] Heaven ! Christ !

'Tis he—the sable minister. Good Lord,

Have mercy !—for the darts are in his hand,

And death becomes reality. Dark man,

Did you not walk along God's hall last night ?

Smith. The monk is crazed. I am an honest soul

Who wrought last night these arrows for the king.
He makes me fear that I am marked to die.

Wilfrith. Not *you*.

Rufus [*to Smith*]. Approach. How many dost thou bring?

Smith. Six, my good lord.

Rufus. They are not for the bow,
You mean them for the deadly arbalest.
They're finely wrought, most cunning Master Smith.
Four I will keep ; and two I'll give to thee,
My Walter, for 'tis meet that sharpest steel
Be gift to him who dealeth deadly strokes.

[*To Smith*.] My thanks, and praise.

Wilfrith. There is a further doom.
The murky hands are empty. All is vain.
Woe, woe !

[*Enter a Messenger*.]

Ætheling Henry. Your news?

Messenger. A letter, gracious king,
From Abbot Serlo.

Rufus. Harry, read the scrawl.
What says it?

Ætheling Henry. That another monk hath dreamed
Such things as this. [*Pointing to Wilfrith*.]

Rufus. Is every brain a cave
Of silly visions? So the Church complains
Among the clouds as well as on the earth.
Walt, do thou justice, even with the things
Which thou hast heard.

Tirel. I will. Ha, ha ! I will.

Rufus. I wonder at Lord Serlo's fantasy,—
A good old abbot, but a simple soul,—
When I am torn with business and great cares,
To send this nonsense of his snoring monks.
What ! Am I like the English, who are scared
From deed and office of necessity
By any whining crone who nods her head ?

Ætheling Henry. The sun declines, and still you linger on.
Tirel. You are afraid.

Ætheling Henry. Fie ! fie ! I think you are,
 You have such craven hold upon your chair.
 By Jupiter, I swear you will not hunt ;
 But break your promise to the forest-ways
 To make them rich with sport.

Tirel [*aside*]. He drinks again,
 As if he'd weary Time from tempting him
 With what he fears to act. [*Aloud.*] A coward ! Ay,
 Thy liver blanches, though thy cheek's afume.
 Fie, thou art fearful of the bunchèd trees,
 And the deer startle thee.

Rufus. I'll hunt, I say.
 But I am sick and sad a hundred-fold,
 More than ye wot. The end is come—I mean
 The feast is over ! Rise. I do not think
 I stuck more closely to my mother's teat
 Than to this table. Nay, I will not go.

Tirel. He's mocking !

Rufus. It's a heavy air. . . . The dogs
 Are baying with a pleasant vulgar sound
 That shames my inner strangeness. Seat, farewell !
 I feel as I should fall !—All's right. We'll go. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V. — *The New Forest: a Glade. Enter the
 Ætheling Henry, William of Breteuil, and Gilbert of
 Clare.*

Ætheling Henry. We're solitary.

Clare. Ay, these tangled brakes
 Confuse companionship.

Ætheling Henry. Their giddy boughs,
 Like sirens' hair, enwind the charmèd sense
 Until it lose its function. Let us on.

Breteuil. We have encountered little sport.

Ætheling Henry. Rich chance
 Wait on our sundered friends, for we to-day

Are not Diana's favourites.

Clare.

Methinks

I hear across the air the chime of dogs

Rejoicing the green distance.

Breteuil.

I hear nought.

Ætheling Henry. There leaps a squirrel ! 'Tis too small
a goal

For arrow's flight. Contemptuous is Fate

To send us such small prey. Beat down the fern !

I caught the glimmer of a couchant side

Gold in the evening beam. A deer ! To chase. [*Exeunt.*

[*Enter from the other side, Robert Fitz-hamon and Gilbert
of Laigle.*]

Fitz-hamon. Where is the king?

Laigle.

I cannot even guess.

I saw him turn about a clump of oak

In company with Tirel ; when I reached

The spreading corner he was gone.

Fitz-hamon.

The pack

Is just below. But we are in a maze,

And there's no thread to guide us. I will blow

My horn.

Laigle. Stay ! Yonder is a grazing herd,

Soft victims for our onslaught.—Where the dell

Stoops to a stony brook, I hear response.

We have not far to seek.

Fitz-hamon.

Within a wood

We're far and near ; perchance may never meet.

Laigle. We'll work to share our favours with the rest,

And call the dogs around us. In this shade

The air is cloistered. It is very hot.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.—*Another part of the Forest: a Glade below
Malwood. Enter the King and Walter Tirel.*

Rufus. Tirel, I am a man again ; these leaves

Breathe life ; the rattle of the quiver shakes

My heart to palpitation and sharp joy.

This freedom makes each throbbing art'ry bold,
 And clears my blood of phantasy. I stand
 The jolly hunter, with my steadfast bow,
 And bosom unconfin'd with secret thoughts
 That girdled my good spirits to this hour
 And kept them tight at dinner.

Tirel. You were sad.
 But who could help rejoicing, that is lord
 Of these deep forests !

Rufus. Every inch of ground
 Is mine ; yon wide-set beeches, mine ; the deer
 All mine, my father's heritage. Like him
 I love them—to the death. One comes. Soft ! soft !
 I'm ready—now ! [*Shoots, and slightly wounds the deer.*]

Tirel. It runs.

Rufus. The light is broad ;
 It blinds me.

Tirel. 'Tis the setting of the sun.

Rufus. I'll shade my eyes.—He's there !

Tirel. See, see, my lord !
 Another one !

Rufus. Shoot, in the devil's name !

[*Tirel shoots—the arrow glances from an oak,
 and pierces the King.*]

Tirel. God save me ! He is falling on the dart.
 It breaks ; he grasps the fragment with a groan
 And pulls out death from hiding in his breast.
 Christ ! He hath found his doom. Wretch, wretch am I !
 [*Coming up to the King.*] For mercy's sake, lift up thy face !

The lips
 Are speechless ; but there's vision in the eyes—
 Their egress nearly dumb—and yet they say :
 "Pain is my portion ; all is lost." I'll seize
 These flow'rs and herbs ; perchance the Lord above
 Will hold them for a sacrament. He's gone.
 Too late ! He's clay, and lifeless. I could think—
 He looks so stout and proof against his fall—

He'd rise again, and bend once more his bow,
 Bend it to slay his murderer. I'll fly.
 They'd call it murder though I did it not.
 The tree, the oak, was Nimrod in this chase,
 And mightily hath hunted.—I am chilled ;
 There is a wind as if the woods breathed free. . . .
 There is a terror round me and this man,
 A gathering of voices through the shades,
 A vengeful trooping of screened witnesses,
 A judge's tension in the very air,
 As it would aim a sentence 'gainst my soul.
 God ! I must fly. If I escape with life,
 To Holy Land I'll bear my ransomed blood.—
 Cold image of dead fellowship, good-bye !—
 I dare not pause ; so fearful is the spot.
 To horse !

[*Exit.*

[*Enter on the other side Robert Fitz-hamon and Gilbert of Laigle.*]

Laigle. Ho, ho ! We shall not meet this eve.
 There's Friar's lantern unseen in the wood,
 Or we should never wander thus like fools.
 The sun is down ; dew falls and shadows grow.

Fitz-hamon. What's that—yon heap with glitter on the
 grass ?

Some hunter sorely hurt.—Alas !—the king !
 And dead as what he lies on. Ah, too true
 The visions swelled around the banks of sleep ;
 He would not see the warning. Now he lies
 In dreamless slumbers that will never wake
 Till every night is done.

Laigle. Alas ! alas !

His hands were full of gifts.

[*Enter William of Breteuil and Gilbert of Clare.*]

Look here and see

Our fortune dead !

Clare.

The king !

Breteuil.

Lift up his bulk.

Fitz-hamon. Too late. The dart hath scattered all his
breath,
And we are ruined.

Breteuil. Let us to our holds
And gather booty in !

Clare. Whose deed is this ?

Fitz-hamon. Some churl's offence.

Laigle. 'Twas Tirel rode with him.

Breteuil. Tirel I saw at gallop even now,
As if the fiend were hindmost.

Clare. Curse the fool !
We'll follow to revenge this regicide.
Off, off, and after ! [*Exeunt Clare and Laigle.*]

Breteuil. Nobles of the land,
This is a pause of moment in affairs.
You all declare for Robert. I'll away
And seize the hoard at Winchester. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter the Ætheling Henry.*]

Ætheling Henry. Well met.
I've had my bow-string mended where a dame,
As brown as Earth, was full of prophecy—
Jove ! What is this ?

Fitz-hamon. Your royal brother dead.

Ætheling Henry. Who knows ?

Fitz-hamon. Some three. De Breteuil's
on his way
To Winchester.

Ætheling Henry. I am your king—He's gone.

[*Fitz-hamon rides off.*]

The king that is, left with the king that was,
Both the crowned fruit of one imperial womb.
William, I'll be a wiser prince than thou,
And yet as proud.—My coming fate must have
The heels of Atalanta.—English oaks,
Farewell ; ye've crowned the Ætheling. Now I'll race
To Winchester, where all the gold is bright. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter Purkis and Beowulf.*]

Purkis. A sunny eve. I'll prop you 'neath this trunk
You know the girth of, while I gather clods
For the oven.—How his face works ! Does he smell
The hunters here about ? There is no sound.

[*At a little distance he perceives the body of Rufus.*

Beowulf. What do you stand so still for ?

Purkis.

Farther off !

[*Kneeling before Rufus, and speaking low.*] The very crown
of England in the dust ;

Those royal eyes sunk in the savageness
Of death ! My king—what, no retainer here ?
They say thy father lay upon the floor :—
That was in Normandy. We Englishmen
Have awe. Well, well,—a freeman and no churl
Shall bear you to your burial. All soaked
With blood—the very Earth ! A majesty
Is on him, and my heart's allegiance
Is his. 'Tis pity that he broke with God.
Such quarrels have one ending. I will kneel,
And humbly as the meekest chamberlain
Put thee to rest, and kiss and fold thy hands
Cross-wise,—the posture's good for judgment-morn,
It turns the Lord's eye off to Calvary
To come back moist with mercy.—How to lift ?
Dad can't assist.

Beowulf. I will have charge of him ;
Give him to me. It was the oak that struck ;
He wounded it ; it gathered up the wrongs
Of generations in its storied pile,
And for the people hath poured out revenge.
The Earth shall leper him ; each trampled blade
Of grass shall bear a drop of blood for dew ;
Nature shall part the spoil ; the gallows fowl
Must not be left unsummoned, the maimed dogs
Must mutilate the quarry.

Purkis.

Father, hush !

Satan has hold of you ; you would not curse

A murdered man. I'll fetch the cart to bear
His bones to Winchester ; he must be laid
'Mid the old royal tombs.

Beowulf. Is he not damned ?

Purkis. We are poor folk, and he has rated us.
God's king ; He'll have a fellow-feeling like ;
No vengeance in His heart. Leave Him to judge.

Beowulf. Yea, bear him through the woods like a gashed
boar,

Present him dripping to your angry God ;
He may not be implacable. In haste
Cloak the foul thing beneath the minster tow'r ;
Heap soil on him ; choke your remembrance
Of his unnat'ral crime ; establish him
In the untaxed dominion of a grave ;—
Earth will unhouse him from his tenement ;
He shall be dispossessed. The crumbling tow'r
Shall spread in ruins over him : his vault
Shall crack her walls, and open up her roof
To let foul, rushing weather on the clay
That shall rot down with refuse and be lost,
The land-mark broken down, the boundary
And guarding hallowed precinct of a tomb.

Purkis [aside]. La ! he is terrible. I cannot doubt
He's some great advocate to press his wrongs.
It's odd now I should tremble to entrust
A dead man to the keeping of a blind.
Great king, you're in the clutch of Destiny !
Death looks a strong-ceiled house ; ah me ! I fear
It is a sorry sanctuary from sin.
There's much remains. Some hoary influence
Sits at the chimney-corner of our lives,
Holding a rightful end in store for all.
There's little we can alter. All the same
It's simple we must give him burial.
I'll fetch the cart with Wilfrith.

[*Exit.*

Beowulf [carefully feeling the corpse]. There are worms

About his darkness. I am satisfied.

[Leaving the body, he props himself against the oak.]

Earth, Earth, O Earth ! the tyrant is struck down.

Thou drew'st the arrow from Fate's sluggish hand ;

Thou sped'st it mortally. Though thy blind sons

Dishonour thee, seeking the younger love

Of Country, swayed by her caprice, to strive

For law or liberty, while thou art bond,

Far off thou hearest Freedom's yeanling cry,

Orphaned, necessitous ; thy motherhood,

O Earth, is prophecy ! Thou wilt prevail.

LOYALTY OR LOVE?



“La patria è la nostra casa : la casa che Dio ci ha data, ponendovi dentro una numerosa famiglia, che ci ama e che noi amiamo naturalmente, colla quale noi possiamo intenderci meglio e più rapidamente che non con altri.”

Mazzini.



PREFACE.

THIS play (written three years ago) is founded on the following passages from Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity* :—

“ Henry (the Sixth, Emperor of Germany) appeared in Italy. . . . Palermo received him with open gates, with clouds of incense and processions. The youthful William, the second son of Tancred, laid his crown at the feet of the Emperor, and received the hereditary Countship of Lecce. The campaign began in August ; the Emperor celebrated Christmas in Palermo A.D. 1194. There had been no sound of arms, no disturbance, except from the jealousy of the Pisans and Genoese : not a drop of blood had been shed. At Christmas, the period of peace and festivity, Henry laid before a great assembly of the realm letters (it was said forged) but letters which, even if they did not reveal, were declared to reveal, an extensive conspiracy against his power. Bishops, nobles, the royal family, were implicated in the charges. No further evidence was offered or required. Peter de Celano sat as supreme justiciary, a man dear to the hard and ruthless heart of Henry. A judicial massacre began. Archbishops and bishops, counts and nobles—Margaritone, the great naval captain, the Archbishop of Salerno—were apprehended, condemned, executed or mutilated with barbarous variety of torture. . . . The Queen Sybilla and her three daughters . . . were thrown into prison ; the young William blinded and mutilated. On the very day when these fatal disclosures were made and the work

of blood began, the Empress Constantia * gave birth at Jesi to Frederick Roger, afterwards the Emperor Frederick II. The Nemesis of Grecian tragedy might be imagined as presiding over the birth."—Book viii. chap. ix.

"Qui ne met la poésie au-dessus de tout n'a pas le sentiment de l'histoire même, car l'histoire est le récit des efforts impuissants des hommes pour arriver à cette beauté sévère que nous trouvons dans le grand art." It is in this spirit that the author has treated the story of this Sicilian insurrection. He does not claim to have reached the severe beauty of art ; his endeavour has been rather to touch with sympathy the impotence of human effort. Historical facts have inspired, not dominated him. The Markwald of the drama has nothing in common with the Markwald of history. The office of Peter de Celano is given to Markwald, and in other ways authority is rejected.

History and fiction, fact and fable, cross and recross the texture of the plot. Melpomene gives her left hand to Clio, her right to the

" . . . mighty lord and master of the lyre,
Unshorn Apollo."

April, 1885.

* Constantia was the legitimate Queen of Sicily, whose rights had been usurped by Tancred, the natural son of one of her brothers. At his death he left his pretensions to his son William and his Queen Sybilla. Henry VI. claimed the throne of Sicily as Constantia's husband.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HENRY VI., *Emperor of Germany and King of Sicily.*

WILLIAM, *Boy-pretender to the throne of Sicily.*

THE ARCHBISHOP OF SALERNO.

MARKWALD of Anweiler, *Justiciary.*

MARGARITONE, *Lord High Admiral of Sicily.*

PETER DE CELANO, *Minion to the Emperor.*

ANDREA, *a Priest, afterwards a Monk, brother to Peter de Celano.*

ADHELD, *German Page to Peter de Celano.*

A FOOL.

CONSTANTIA, *Empress of Germany and Queen of Sicily.*

SYBILLA, *mother to William.*

IOLANTE, *wife to Markwald.*

CLARA, *sister to Markwald.*

VERONICA, *a noble Sicilian lady.*

MADELEINE, *sister to Adheld, in Iolante's train.*

AZAIRE, *a Moorish girl, waiting-woman to Iolante.*

SCENE.—*Palermo and its neighbourhood.*



LOYALTY OR LOVE?

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Room in a Sicilian Palace. Enter Veronica and Margarito.*

Veronica. The Emperor
Is then about to land?

Margarito. And in his train
Are notable Sicilians.

Veronica. Ay, indeed !
Markwald of Anweiler they say leads home
Iolante, our fair countrywoman.—Ah !
You fret your brow ; my words I fear give pain ;
Before the image of that saint I've marked
You're often on your knees. Your idol, sir,
Is now but rudely worshipp'd.

Margarito. Will that make
Me less religious?

Veronica. Your audacity
Becomes you, Margarito ; 'tis the plume
Upon your cap.

Margarito. I was at Algiers
When she consented. So think not, fair dame,
I shall be less her gallant when she comes
Once more to grace Palermo.—You will find
One worthy of your arts in Henry's train.

Oh ! he will bring you one step from your throne
Who makes all women crouch !

Veronica.

Celano here ?

I only love my countrymen, nor those
Among them who are leagued to give our land
To insufferable Teutons.

Margarito.

All the same

You'll catch him as the plague-spot ; he exhales
An amorous infection. Henry's self
Is sick of him.

Veronica.

For this *I* prophesy

A pair of Teuton eyes whose northern blue
Shall freeze your patriotism. Nay, but here
We'll have no noisy politics. I've set
Those words to music ; will you sing them now ?

[*Taking a lyre.*

I think it was Sicilia that forgot.

SONG.

If the sun our white headlands with flame
Fail'd to greet,
Should we deem he would shroud them in shame ?
Nay ; blot
The sweet
Daylight not ;—
Heaven forgot.

If soft Spring fail'd the flow'rs name by name
To entreat,
Should we fear she would harden Earth's frame ?
Her hot
Breath sweet
Bloweth not ;—
She forgot.

From my love if no gay token came,
Were it meet
To think she had slighted Love's claim ?
A knot
So sweet
Snappeth not ;—
She forgot.

If a land full of memories and fame
 At the feet
 Of a tyrant bow'd down should we blame?
 A spot
 So sweet
 Sinneth not ;—
 It forgot.

Margarito. Veronica, there's that within your voice—
 You've known no heart-break ; it must be a part
 Of your superb dissimulation, yet
 You earn this kiss—a tribute to your skill.

[*Taking her hand.*

A hand—oh, it's not white !—a sonneteer
 Could not express it. 'Tis too exquisite
 For any use but this.

[*Kissing it.*

[*Enter Celano.*]

Veronica [*withdrawing her hand*]. 'Tis mine to give
 In hospitality and to assure
 Frank welcome to my guests.

Celano [*to Margarito*]. Ah ! I divine
 You've been consulting with this lady how
 Our too time-scanted city can prepare
 For her great monarch's entry !

Veronica. Surely you,
 Who have put off your native manners, best
 Can teach the taste of foreigners.

Celano. I will,
 With promptest courtesy. You first must paint
 These waxen cheeks a German would despise
 As bloodless.

Margarito. This is artifice to bring
 The balsam-blushes to the lady's face.

Celano. In future it must be great Markwald's self,
 As famed by sea as land in victories,
 Must loiter in your galleries, and not
 A sailor of your isle.

Margarito. This insolence,

Save as enriching us with rainbow change,

[*Touching Veronica's cheek.*]

From rose to pearl, were scarce deserving note.

Lady Veronica cannot forget

She is Sicilian,—doubtless she will give

To strangers welcome, be they German churls

(Crowds of Apulian captives in their train)

Or . . .

Celano. Have you lover's right for this?

Margarito.

Now speak,

Veronica.

Veronica. He simply has the right

Of subject to speak honour of his queen.

Am I to blame men seek me on their knees,

My dear lord councillor?

Celano.

Superbly urged!

[*To Margarito.*] Now, sir, the hour of public audience

Is pass'd, I claim a lover's privacy,

My right; the lady has denied it yours.

Veronica [*to Margarito*]. State-business, not Veronica,
forbids

A further parley.

[*Exit Margarito.*]

[*To Celano.*] Now be merciful.

Tell me of Andrea.

Celano.

His sickness wanes.

Veronica. If Heaven should restore him . . . ?

Celano.

You would add

A pray'r I should release him to espouse

The girl Veronica, whom he seduced—

The girl who, when a virgin, won the heart

Of Peter de Celano :—so I will,

On this condition : it be noised abroad

How my young brother won your love before

You were my bride, and how you forced his mind.

Prepare your blushes.

Veronica.

I will do your will,

Beseeching only grace for Andrea.

I taught him earthly passion ; he is pure—

Celano. As Mother Church could wish ; he's penitent
Now of his frailty : to the holy nun
Who from his fever hath deliver'd him,
He's sworn the remnant of his life to pray'r
And patient fasting.

Veronica. Penitent ! Oh then,
I do beseech you marry me—

Celano. Not yet.

Veronica. O God ! It must be false ; let me see words—
His hand. [*Celano gives her a paper.*]

[*Reads.*] “Veronica, I've found my bride,
The Church ; 'twas only when you feign'd her voice
I loved you.” [*She sol's.*]

Celano. Let me counsel ! Your one aim
Must be to woo the brother in the world,
Still unespoused—to-morrow to contract
With Madeleine, a fair Thuringian
In Iolante's retinue ;—and yet
I hesitate, for the young Moor Azair
Hath turn'd upon me her black amorous eyes
With passion I had best assuage.

Veronica. I am
Your victim ; give me orders ; but my name !
Have pity on it, if 'twill be your wife's.

Celano. Had you as wife betray'd me in this sort !—
As it is you'll suffer while I recollect.

Veronica !

Eyes blue as incensed air, and, oh ! I thought
As holy ; every drop that falls a gem.
Pooh ! they're to mourn the Church's prisoner !
Not the lips !—but haply he o'erlook'd this brow.
I'll think it is Celano's. Keep it smooth. [*Kisses her. Exit.*]

Veronica. I'll live for my good name. He only knows
My misery, and he will lighten it.
Margaritone shall not haunt my house.
What said he of a Moorish girl ? Can I . . .

Veronica,—can he put me to the shame
 Of suffering a rival ; must I wait
 Till he's worn out a brace of victims, ere
 I'm safe in all a wife's serenity?
 My course is clear :—
 He has ambition, and I'll cover it
 With the mantle of my grace. We'll rule the world. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in another Sicilian Palace. Iolante seated before a mirror; Azaire, herself crowned with roses, is wreathing her mistress's hair.*

Iolante [*looking in the mirror*]. How well these passionate red roses look

Against a skin the ardent sun hath kiss'd
 Into a shame of darkness ! On my white
 The crimson hearts would pour their rich desire
 And find it harshly virginal. Swart brows
 Alone should carry roses. How say'st thou?

Azaire. All lovers give them . . .

Iolante. Ah, you have a love?

Is he a Moor or a good Christian soul?

Azaire. I may not tell. . . . I know not anything.

Iolante. You never have been awkward till in love ;
 But Love is blind, so we must give a hand
 To help his stumbling. What a handkerchief
 You've tied about your neck !—the needles sure
 Stitch'd it with threads of the three heavenly skeins
 That make a rainbow. You'll outshine the bride.

[*Enter Madeleine.*]

All joy and blessing be with you from Heaven.

But must a bride

Put by the roses of her blood and wear

Only the lilies of her spotless flesh?

Methinks Azaire

Hath stol'n your cheeks to set upon her brow.

Madeleine. My bridegroom loves another !

Azaire. Let me go
To get . . .
Iolante. There's water in the ewer, child ;
'Tis useless for the heart. My Madeleine,
One that could cut you to the quick of grief
Hath never loved you.

Madeleine. But the veil I'll keep
For spousal with my Christ.

Iolante. O cruelty,
Wild beast of vices, sin with claw and tooth,
The heart thou holdest is a den, tho' hung
With grace as with a vine ! Surely in jest
You have been wrong'd. Celano comes himself.

[*Enter Celano and Groomsmen.*]

Celano. I come for my fair bride.

Iolante. You've frightened her.
Her lips are trembling as a dove's two wings.
Press them to calm with kisses.

Celano. They are grey.
I'll close thy brown ones with a kiss together,
My nightingale ! [Kisses *Azaire*.]

Iolante. What does this mean ? *Azaire*,
Confess that you are guilty.

Azaire. Yea, of love.
We were fellow-maids together, tho' you kept
The Moorish girl well hid. Last night unseen
I took a bunch of roses from his hand
For Madeleine ; he kept mine prisoner,
And smiled, "The roses were a bridal-wreath,"
He bade me twist them in my hair, and wait
His pleasure till the morrow.

Iolante. It is mine
That instantly you leave me, traitoress.

Celano. Retire in my protection. Mark ye that.
Hither, sweet slave. [*To Madeleine.*] 'Tis not unmannerly
To ask for what pertains not to you now.
To Cæsar what is Cæsar's, to the bride

What is the bride's.

Madeleine. And what is God's to God.
May I have this veil in which to wed myself
To Heaven?

Celano. Nay, sister.

Madeleine. Then I'll dress your bride.
Th' attire is all about me. I shall want
No help. I am your humble maid, Azaire.

Celano. Less rigorous the service of my bride
Than that of Christ's.

Madeleine. Her servants must put on
Meekness as livery, and this event
Shall be the loom on which I'll weave it me,
For Christ's sake, [*aside*] and for yours, Celano, yours.

Celano. Delay not then, fair maid, to dress the bride.

Madeleine. I had learnt the duties of a wife by rote,
The first obedience. With will as meek
As he had found in Madeleine his wife,
I veil Azaire.

Celano. Well spoken! we will wait
At the chapel, friends, with your good grace and leave.

[*Exeunt Celano, Azaire, Madeleine, and others.*]

Iolante. Am I a creature of bed-ridden will
To suffer it?—And Madeleine is gone!—

[*Enter Markwald.*]

Oh, good my lord, great treachery is here.
Celano hath but now departed hence
With Azaire as his bride, and Madeleine
Weeping behind, like Love's new year and old.

Markwald. I know Celano's business everywhere,
But look not for him here, where I have peace
With Iolante.

Iolante. But you do not note
His sin's enormity. He's broken troth
With one as stainless as the marble is,
O'er-fountain'd every moment, and—the shame!—
Hath grossly ta'en the Moorish girl.

Markwald.

In sooth,

I like not these alliances of blood
At natural enmity ;—
But you, offend not Peter, for the king
Holds him in highest love. He wields the brain
O' the monarch ; I but execute commands.
Loyalty, Iolante ! Why this morn
My prince hath spoken of a marriage-tie
Between my sister Clara and the young
Sicilian Margarito.—Ah, he comes,
My future brother.

[*Enter Margarito.*]

Margarito. Trusting here to find
The maiden whom the Emperor makes my wife,
Your sister Clara. [*To Iolante.*] Lady, have I leave
To rob you of the sweet companionship
Of those most grave blue eyes ?

Markwald. Get *her* consent,
And I will order Clara to appear.
The German maids are shy, but true of heart.
Believe you, you can trust her.

[*Exit.*

Margarito [*approaching Iolante*]. So we meet.
The little missal that you left with me,
And those slight rhymes you gave me to re-set,
I will return to you.

Iolante. Nay, Margarito, they are no love-favours. Think
not Clara will be jealous when she sees the holy prayers I
tasked you with, or the childish words I prayed you bind
into a canzonet. Clara will give the answer to my foolish
wonder why love hath wings.

Margarito [*taking a guitar and singing*].

Love's wings are wondrous swift,
When hanging feathers lift.
Why hath Love wings—
Great pinions strong of curve ?
His wild desires to serve ;

To swoop on the prey,
And bear it away,
Love hath wings.

Love's wings are golden soft,
When dropping from aloft.

Why hath Love wings—
Feathers of glistening fleece?
To soothe with balmy peace,
And warmth of his breath
Souls he cherisheth,
Love hath wings.

Love's wings are broad of van,
Stretch'd for great travel's span,

Why hath Love wings—
Mail of the sea-bird's might?
From feeble hearts and slight
To lift him forlorn
To a fastness of scorn,
Love hath wings.

Iolante. I did not ask for music.

Margarito. True ; but I
Needed it.

Iolante. Margarito, I am vex'd
To hear you're taking Clara for your wife.

Margarito. Oh, I have suffer'd from such nuptial news !

Iolante. I fear you're yielding to your monarch's choice.
Teutons to licence press their loyalty ;
But we Sicilians, we should mate for love.

Margarito. Have you ?

Iolante. I was not chosen by the Emperor ;
Scarcely in secret dare my Markwald woo,
Nor had he won the king's consent except
For his rare services.

Margarito. Oh, I will make
Your Clara happy. We Sicilians,
We're masters in the art of catching love.
The woman is not born I could not make
Life-happy with my smile. Veronica,

The haughtiest beauty that Palmero boasts—
The silk rustles when I near her. Do you think
I'll fail to get the homage of that frank,
Little, stolid-hearted Teuton?

Iolante. What, you brag?
Margaritone, for this haughtiness
May Cupid humble you! In turn confess
Where pay *you* homage?

Margarito. To my countrymen—
That is, excluding males. You're for the feast
The king holds on the day our little prince
Must give away his crown—a pretty sight—
For title of a count? You will be there
To see this, *Iolante*?

Iolante. How escape?
Tis my lord's office to pick up the crown
And offer it to Henry; it is mine
In all fair ceremonies by his side
To stay assenting.

Margarito [*touching his guitar*]. To my music, then!
[*Enter Markwald and Clara.*]

Markwald. I've had a task
To bring her hither. When you're at the wars
You'll leave her safely; she will keep the house.

Margarito. And I will keep her heart—a precious charge.
Clara—O eyes blue as the sea I love!—
Will you come teach me of Teutonic faith,
And give the wild sea-captain a sure port
To anchor in, when life's tempestuous?

Clara. If you are friendly to my land.

Margarito. A fleet
At th' Emperor's service is my warranty.
If so—why then . . .

Clara. What is the rest, my lord?

Margarito. Sweet Clara, this—that you must be my wife.
Tears!

Clara. You're a stranger.

Margarito. Dear, of course I am.
Would you marry with your brother !

Markwald. That's well urged.
[*To Clara.*] Come, come, I'll take you to your sovereign lord,
And when you know it is his will you wed,
You will not close your fist against the ring.

[*Exeunt Clara, Markwald, and Margarito.*]

Iolante [*looking after Margarito*]. Can such a nature
pour into a creek?
Ay, but it washes the whole world beside.

SCENE III.—*A Terrace. Enter Emperor and Celano.*

Emperor. 'Tis hot, an air for roses, not for men.
What were we saying ?

Celano. Please you, my good praise,
Which made the summer hotter on my cheek.

Emperor. True, Peter, you're the apple of our eye ;
The perfect politician ; but this whim
Of setting in a Moorish wench's train
A lady of our land . . .

Celano. For discipline ;
I'd have a wife the Sultan could not match,
Amorously dull—no treason. I would sleep
On's knee, and dream what beauties I desire ;
She watching till she snored.

Emperor. Well, let us hear
Of the Moor's speedy death. Your gallantries
Outrage our honest German court. Don't take
Your wickedness to church. A monstrous freak,
To play the bridegroom to that devil-born
Hot-blooded little beauty.

Celano. Absolute
Your will as my obedience.

Emperor. There strikes
The hour we granted Markwald.

[*Exit*]

Celano [*to Fool without*]. Fool, you here ?

Fool. Surely when wisdom goes out of door, folly may peep in at window.

Celano. Has a fool eyes?

Fool. No; coupled with Love, he's blind.

Celano. That most melancholy man, the Archbishop, has found you gamesome.

Fool. I feed on him, he's victuals to me; he's so desperate a man, and a pride—oh, but I'd live to drive the waggon, with him at the cart's tail!

Celano. You shall.

Fool. Heyday, you humour me;—then hang him up by the leg and moralize. I'd preach to him by the hour.

Celano. You shall.

Fool. An' yet to see the poor man pull a long face, and convince him only by smiling could he hope to stand on two legs—to propose to him either to dimple his cheeks with laughter or his neck with the noose; all the time he fixing his dull fish eye upon me till it glazed. It were a spectacle!

Celano. *He shall.* The Archbishop walks much a' nights on the long terrace by the chestnuts. Lie on the wall and listen. Keep your ears prick'd for treason.

Fool. I'll be tale-bearer,
To see th' Archbishop hanging by the leg,
His long face downward! Ha, ha, ha!

Celano. You shall.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Room. Enter Iolante and Clara.*

Iolante. My Clara, comfort me. I have no maids
About me now; my bright Azaire is gone,
With her pretty Moorish ways, and Madeleine,
So sweet a preacher to my playfulness,—
For, Clara, I must be playful. Oh, I feel
A loneliness upon me, even here
In Sicily half-exiled.

Clara. Can that be
With Markwald's sister for companion?—but

I've seen you yawn in Markwald's company.
He's good enough for the king.

Iolante. And yet for Iolante's veins too slow.
A child, I laugh'd and clapp'd my hands beside
The rivers that ran swift ; the sluggish streams——

Clara. Iolante ! These are most disloyal words.
I trust you feel some rev'rence for a name
The Emperor holds in honour.

Iolante. Ay, and you,
You girl with the grave face, I trust you feel
A proper reverence
For the Lord High Admiral, who has, at best,
For the great Empire that you venerate
But politic affection ?

Clara. Do you doubt ?

Iolante. Come now, I have you ! Do you love this man
Better than your own German land and tongue ?
Will you forget them all, and with his kiss
Receive Sicilia to your heart ?

Clara. Oh no !
My brother wishes me to marry him—
And, and . . .

Iolante. That massy raven hair framing a brow
Of stainless marble ! Clare, I often think
With men, like Margarito, who have lives
Fulfill'd of knightly enterprise, the tears
They have no time to shed, soften the clime
O' the eyes to exquisite humidity.
Clare, did you see how as he turn'd he gave
His life away with one glance of his eyes ?

Clara. He's right to trust me so ; we German girls
Are never treach'rous.

Iolante. The wise brother Mark,
For all your bitter words, has shown no fear
Of a Sicilian bride.

Clara. Who slanders him
Behind his back.

Iolante. Most virulently :—not my lord alone.
'Tis natural

In me, removed from anything I love,
To eye in the cold blood of commentary
Its virtues and defects. My Markwald's voice
Makes me again a partisan. But, Clare,
You think *I love you* is a spell to keep
Margaritone at your side? I say
He'll need to be cajoled, implored, malign'd,
Threaten'd, entreated twenty times a day
To keep in temper ;—more, to be amused,
As to his head, sweet Clara, by your wit.
Can you listen to his sonnets? Shall you care
Hear of his Arab training? In a word,
Can you dish up this crude sincerity
Into a pretty falseness without guile?

Clara. Never ; that is your way.

Iolante. Go, sullen girl !
But when you're mew'd up with your tapestry,
Your lord a-hunting, sick of his dull home,
You'll cease to blame
Your sister Iolante : you will know
She's the wise matron who, when truth's a thorn,
Mosses it o'er with falsehood for the feet
She loves to tread on.—I was saying, dear,
[*Enter Markwald.*]
She knows not how to rule my countrymen.

Clara. She says
Sincerity is crude ; moss it with lies
For lovers' footsteps.

Markwald. Iolante ! Wife !

Iolante. Thus he expostulates !—But why this brow
So over-clouded?

Markwald. Women's tears, they rust
The blade of manhood ! I have stood two hours
By the old stricken queen, who on her knees
Beseeches Henry to return her child,

When he's discrown'd him. "'Tis himself I want ;
His breath, his hair, his limbs." She supplicates—
"Take all his royalties."

Iolante. There is no way ?

Markwald. My lord is stark ; she must resign the child
Into his charge.

Iolante. Oh, he's too mere a babe
For men to handle.

Markwald. Could you nurture him
Till he's of age for convent discipline—
For he must be a priest—my lord might yield,
As you're my wife. He knows our loyalty.

Clara. Why *Iolante* would so love the boy
She'd join in a conspiracy to put
The crown on's head.

Markwald. Foul slander, *Clara* ; she trusts
Her husband so entirely she would give
The children of her body to be torn
Piecemeal if he required it. If I win *[Exit Clara.*
This favour, you must show a great reserve
To *Margarito* and *Sybilla*.

Iolante. Yes.
For the reft mother, I could no more face
Such spoil of nature than frequent the streets
Of a sack'd town ; but *Margarito*, think !—
Whom *Clara* will soon becloud, we must not keep
His spirits on low diet, or the king
Will dream he's plotting treasons. She's too slow
For a Sicilian.

Markwald. From experience
You speak ?—

Iolante. Yes, *Markwald*, you can't understand
Half that I feel :—for *Sicily*,
Sybilla, *Margarito*, even *you*,
Not half the ways I love you.

*[She puts up her hands to caress him ; as he pushes them
ack, a joint of his armour grazes one of them.]*

Markwald. You must learn
Not fight against my will when I command.
You think yourself too clever ; I must keep
My wife from peril.—What, you are not hurt ?
It's nothing.

Iolante. A mere scratch ; but such may break
The skin of the spirit. You'll not rule me thus.
Leave me awhile.

[*Enter Margarito.*]

Margarito. Iolante, I am come
To have you teach me how to court my love.
She's obstinate.

Iolante. Then try the Teuton way.
Drive your affection as with hammer in
The soft places of her heart.

Margarito. I did not know
I broke upon your privacy.

Markwald. You do.
At present for state reasons 'tis my wish
That you be little at my house ; my wife,
I trust, may have Prince William in her charge
To teach the German language.

Margarito. I obey,
Most grateful for the cause ; intelligent
Of your prudent fear and forethought.

Markwald. There you judge
Most circumspectly. I'll unfold you more.
I would befriend Sicilia.

[*Going.*]

Iolante [*aside*]. He is gone.
Before a stranger I've insulted him,
My Markwald ! I have given him no son,
And he a child of my own race to rear.—
I'll sue for grace in Margarito's sight.
Margarito !—Oh, my lord ! [*They return.*] Thanks, on my
knees,
For your great gift and pardon ! When you say
In our Sicilian, which you blunder at,

A word too strong, I put it back again
 In your own speech more gentle—so I sought
 To turn you from a course that seem'd more stern
 Than I with wifely privilege descry
 The purpose of your heart.

[*Markwald turns to her. Exit Margarito.*]

Markwald. Iolante, God hath given us no child.
 I thought the boy would comfort you.

Iolante.

He will—

Not only as Sicilian, as your gift.

Oh, Markwald . . .

[*Sobs.*]

Markwald. There, there ! Why the merest touch
 Of a mail'd hand brings blood to a woman's cheek.
 Kneeling for pardon ! Love, a German wife
 Could not look humbler in her penitence,
 Nor half so handsome.

Iolante.

End as you began—

Wife, Iolante !

Markwald. Iolante, wife.

[*Clasping her.*]

SCENE V.—*Celano's House. A Room. Enter Madeleine
 and Azaire.*

Azairé. It grieves me sore
 Thus to receive your service.

Madeleine.

'Tis his will

And Heav'n's. I, humbling thus myself, shall win
 High place in paradise. Your beauty is
 A snare to him.

Azairé.

Is 't that ? I cannot tell.

I love him, Madeleine. It seems to me
 That other women cannot look on Love
 Save it be dress'd for them a thousand ways.
 My appetite can diet on raw meat.
 You love because 'tis profitable ; Christ
 Will think of your humility ; while I
 Love simply, madly, as I love the food

In sight when I am hungry. 'Twas a whim
That set the veil on me ; but if instead
You had been honour'd, and my only hope
Of being loved by him a life of shame,
I would have stoop'd to 't. If I could not be
The silver flagon for his lips at feast,
Then the horn-cup he'd catch up for a drink
When he was thirsty, hunting. So I love.
I do not care for anything but love,
Nor how I get it. He is coming in.
You'll leave us, Madeleine.

Madeleine. My lord forbids
That I should ever leave you. I'll retire
In shadow to my tapestry.

[Retires.

Azaire [aside]. How cold
The girl is ! I could hate her.

[Enter Celano.]

Celano. Well, Azaire,
My little spit-fire wife, what angers you ?

Azaire. I'm vex'd and angry at this misery.

[Points to Madeleine.

Remove it from me ere I kiss you.

Celano. See,
My pretty tyrant, how your slave obeys.
Madeleine, leave us.

[Exit Madeleine.

There !—How lovelier
You look each hour, a rose-bud that at dawn
Was only a red rose-bud and to-night
Bends over me all rose, even to the air
It breathes on me. Say, are you wholly mine ?
In the whole world do you love aught but me ?

Azaire. You're all to me. One language and one life
Are far too short for me to reckon up
My wealth in you.

Celano. Do you love God ?

Azaire. Oh no !
Not in the least ; remove that jealousy.

Celano. Why that is well ; then you are wholly *mine*.

Azaire. No, you are mine, mine own.

Celano. Yours, little fool !

Ay, as a wine-butt is sole property

O' the cup. I am the world's.

Azaire. Oh, misery !

You love none save *Azaire* ?

Celano. I woo a dame

Who pray'd me on her knees to marry her.

Azaire. She loves you ?

Celano. No. Why is it that *you* love ?

Tell me, *Azaire*.

Azaire. You're beautiful ; your voice

Is like a touch to me, your touch a bond.

Celano. None ever loved *Celano* in this sort.

Azaire. And does *Celano* love that other one

So, thus ?

Celano. What, *Madeleine* ?

Azaire. That girl who asks ?

Celano. You mean your servant. No, child ; but the
king

Compels me to receive the icy girl

In my reluctant arms.

Azaire. Then must I die.

Celano. O you delicious creature, no reproach !

Flee from me, sorceress ! Among the hills

I have a tiny villa. There I'll come ;

Nay, do not bind me—not a pledge. You know

You are the only woman in whose love

I have delight. You love so senselessly

You satisfy my soul. No tears ! You start

At dawn ; till then we'll make the darkness glad. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Window-seat in a Chamber of the Palace.*
Enter Constantia and Iolante.

Constantia. O Iolante, was not that an owl
I' the sun-basking ivy? Yet forsooth,
The shadow of Time's finger points the noon,
Saw we a dial. Wherefore then this owl,
This hooded thing on the bright glove of day,
This page of purblind Night, this trumpeter
To tongueless apparitions?

Iolante. 'Tis to prick
Our joy with sense of mutability.

Constantia. Did you not smile, your answer had been sad.
Ah me!

There's even such a rueful prophet lurks
Behind my branching gladness.

Iolante. 'Tis to make
More precious your felicity.

Constantia. False cheer!
Obscure Distrust sits in my joy's recess,
Distrust, O Iolante, of my lord.
I've laid Sicilia in his grasp. To see
A mail'd hand close over a butterfly
Were not more cruel. Ah, there was a time
I could have mated you! But then he came,
Th' Apulian Conqueror, and gave my sweet'st
Companion to his stalwart captain ere
My lips recover'd liberty. And I

Must bear him children, as my countrymen
 Yield him their labour's first-fruits. My desire
 Is not to make *him* father ; 'tis to give
 A man-child to my country. O my land,
 My life, my blood, for thee my womb's in toil,
 And I shall see thy prince's heritage
 Trampled before my face ; Sicilian blood
 Pour'd out by him who hath begot my child.
 This is distraction.

Iolante. Such distraction waits
 On motherhood, my queen ; full treasures
 Bring terrors and forebodings of the thief ;
 Pangs that the poor
 Would suffer smiling. Were I in your case,
 Sweet lady, I would bear your world of cares
 To feel a babe's hand patter its soft praise
 O' my bosom's bounty. But you err to think
 My monarch forced me into marriage-bonds.
 I love the good duke Markwald ; openly,
 With all the noblest of my land in sight,
 I must have chosen him ; he's true of heart,
 Most stern for justice.

Constantia. Iolante, say—
 Do you love best your country or your lord ?

Iolante. My lord so well that I have given him
 Even to his charge my Sicily in trust.

Constantia. Oh, Iolante, I abide at home
 And will not see plots brewing,—will not see
 Old playmates in mask'd faces greeting me.
 A shadowy headsman ever is behind ;
 While Henry keeps
 Close lips and moves about with courtesy.
 There's thunder in his nature.

Iolante. A sweet son
 Will soften him. The Hohenstaufen hair,
 Keep to the golden tinct.

Constantia. My southern blood

Repels invasion from the north ; my child
 Will be all Sicily. Unhappy boy,
 A poet-hearted prince, set i' the midst
 Of barbarous Teutons—Iolante ! What !
 Are you asleep ?—Almost. The very time,
 Still with satiety of light and heat,
 Is Slumber's opportunity. Lie here ;
 Do as your eyes would have you, for their lids
 Are curving to half-moons.

Iolante. And leave the queen
 Untended !

Constantia. Others with more wakeful orbs
 Shall dress me for the council, which my lord
 Untimely holds at mid-day. Sicily
 Is on her knees that I should slumber not.

[*Exit Constantia.*

[*Iolante sleeps ; to her enter Margarito.*]

Margarito. The halcyon Sleep
 Hath made a blessed calm. O safest hour . . .
 To turn her with the helm of my desire
 From anchor'd port to Love's free waves. But if
 She will not swerve ?—why, then there is the make
 O' the brute in Markwald ; if I madden him,
 He'll so be-tyrant her, she'll take my course ;
 She's the prow-head of my spirit.—What ! My glove !
 I'll leave it here for Markwald to surmise
 His worst ; my longings far outleap his fears.
 I'll kiss her for an earnest of my guilt.
 Iolante, I'm audacious. I'll awake
 And daze her with the glare of my wild love.

My Iolante ! [*Kissing her passionately ; she wakes*

Iolante. Where's Margarito ?—What a cry is this ?—
 From such assault

Your sword, my knight, should save me. Slay the beast
 Who with vile purpose hath surprised my couch.

Margarito. I must be satisfied . . .

Iolante [aside]. I'm safe ; scarce knew I, waking suddenly,

What had befallen. Heaven give me strength
To rescue him from peril.—Why to-night
I'll yield to your entreaties ; we'll cajole
The unsuspecting Teuton ; he shall learn
What it is to trust Sicilians.—You are cold ;
You do not answer me.

Margarito. Oh horrible
To catch Lust's accents on those holy lips !
The fair saint Iolante I'd seduce ;
Not a base creature who would tempt me with
Suggestion fouler than my devilish thought.

Iolante. The solemn Clara shall be mock'd—

Margarito. Peace, peace !

It is as God's own mother from her shrine
Should stoop to tempt and cozen. I'll away
From this cursed Sicily ; all patriot thought
I'll smother and resign myself
To any life of blasphemy : what hope
If Iolante is . . .

Iolante. There is no hope
For any land whose women dare not trust
Their countrymen. I, in Sicilia's name,
Appeal to you. From holy sleep I woke
To find you in temptation. Heav'n hath heard,
Camping the legion'd angels round your soul,
Ere my slow prayers could mount. Confess yourself
At chapel, Margarito. Do not think
Of Clara till you're shriven.

Margarito. And of you
Never? You set a gulf
'Twixt my damn'd exile and your blessedness ?
[*Half-aside.*] I'll bridge it an unhallow'd way . . .

Iolante. I trust
The man who not a moment could delight
In woman thought disloyal. From henceforth
I trust you wholly, Margarito. But,
Since noble Markwald's sister hath a heart

Like her brother's of true temper, I must train
Your ill-deserving spirit to receive
The worship of such natures. Fare you well.

[*Giving her hand, which he kisses reverently.*

[*Exit Margarito.*

[*Sobbing bitterly.*] What is there in me brings the devils
thick

As flies to honey? Is it possible
A knight could fall to lust of anything
That has no smutch of sin? At church I've seen
A picture of lean Lust; she dieted
On refuse. Faugh! [*going to a mirror*] I am not beautiful
Th' ensnaring way. My simple netted hair
It's wavy brown and only good enough
For the wind to play with; and my skin is clear;
My Markwald says I have a homely cheek
For an honest man to kiss; and any child
Has eyes like these. Veronica's a throat
One needs must gaze on as the dazzling wall
Faced with chalcedony; mine's common stone.

[*Enter Markwald.*]

Markwald. My wife before a mirror! Vanity!

Iolante. Markwald, what do you see here?

Markwald.

Not a saint,

And by no means a beauty; not a flow'r,
Nor jewel; but a pretty little girl,
Who'll sing and smile and not forget her pray'rs
For one she loves;—a little thing to trust.

[*She silently embraces him and goes out.*

She kiss'd me sobbing; she is not herself.

[*Taking up the glove.*] What's yonder?—Margarito's glove!

—The fool's

Been telling her she's handsome: my poor praise
Doubtless fell flat. I will not suffer him

About my wife. Iolante! [*Re-enter Iolante.*] What is this?

Iolante. A glove. 'Twas Margarito let it drop;
He has been with me, had been with me now

But that I sent him to confession : he
Displeased me much.

Markwald. Confess to me the sin
You sent him to the priest with.

Iolante. What, betray !
Shall a priest's ear
Be safer than a lady's breast ? My lord,
No curious torture could wring out from me
The least
Of the words you woo'd me with : they're buried here
'Mong other precious relics : rifle not !
What's laid on the altar's consecrate, altho'
It be not my lord Markwald's offering.

[Curtsies, playfully shakes her head, and retires.]

Markwald. I like it not ; yet could as lief accuse
A child of treason as that face of thought
Un-innocent. Some grief of her country's perhaps
With which he pester'd her. Poor child, she loves
Her Sicily, and I must execute
My king's commands, discrown her little prince
To-morrow. It will cut her to the heart. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II.—*Room of State. Enter with great pomp the Emperor, the Empress, Prince William, Markwald, Celano, Margarito, Sybilla, Iolante, Veronica, and others.*

Emperor. My Germans and Sicilians, whom the cloak
Of empire would enfold—my equal care,
To-day we take our lawful sovereignties
From the thief's hand, glad that his tender years
So plead for him, we can preserve his life.
His ancestors——

Sybilla [aside, looking passionately at the Emperor]. Curse
him, ye dead !

Emperor. Have brought
The fair boy to this day's disgrace ; he stands

Bringing the colour to Sicilian cheeks
At thought of their misplacèd fealty——

Sybilla [aside]. Curse him, ye living !

Emperor.

For the guilt of birth

Desiring pardon : eager to protest
His parents did most wrongfully usurp
My southern throne.

Sybilla [aside]. O God the Father, curse !

Come hither, child. [*As he comes to her, she thrusts him forward, and looks up to heaven, then glances at the Emperor.*] Curse him, O Christ the Son.

Iolante. He doth not cry ; his face is like a cloud
That holds the rain.

Celano. Come, little lord, step up.

Empress. Come hither.

Markwald.

Bravo !

Archbishop.

Kneel, and speak by me.

Prince William. I, William, unlawfully called of Sicily king, do here on my knees tender to my liege-lord Henry—Emperor—the crown and lands which are his, to hold and have ; beseeching mercy for the great sin of their treasonous retention by me and my fathers committed against God and our liege-lord, whose hand I kiss and tremble. [*Thunder.*

Margarito [aside]. It is not thunder, but Sicilia's groan.

Emperor. Rise, Count of Lecce,—rightful title this,
Which sons may bear—a spotless heritage.

Our dearest vassal, our henceforward joy !
Sicilians, see ! our knees are Mercy's throne.

Margarito [aside to Iolante]. The golden light hath
tasted misery

In the bow'd sunshine of that golden head,
That leaves our hearts in night.

Iolante.

Oh, do not speak !

Emperor. Yet since on stock of rude disloyalty
We would engraft obedience, this boy,
From the accustom'd care of his own kin
We take, to give him, underneath our eye,

New cherishing and foster discipline,
Entrusted to staunch Markwald and his wife.

Markwald. Sire, we are honour'd servants—Come to her.
[*Leads William to Iolante.*]

Sybilla [*raising her head*]. Maria—Mother! Curse the
barren thing
Whose womb was never thrill'd nor bosom suck'd,
To whom they give the child that I have borne.

Iolante. Willie!—my little . . .
[*He bursts into tears.*]

Margarito [*aside*]. His tears within us blush to drops of
blood
We'll weep in battle.

Archbishop [*aside*]. Cover up your fires,
Friend Admiral.

Iolante [*aside*]. There, there! We'll go away.—
I'll take him to my little privy bow'r,
Wherein the honied woodbine's dainty paps
Suckle the bees, and tell him fairy-tales.

[*Exit with Prince William.*]

Sybilla. You've stripp'd me of my child; 'twere modesty
To hide my naked motherhood.

Markwald. Yes, yes.

Emperor. We spare your presence.—Take her from the
hall.

Rejoice, Sicilians, for your lawful queen
Will speedily present you with a prince
Worthy your homage. Stay, Constantia, stay,
Smile on your people and confirm their hope.

Constantia. I'm deadly faint. [Retiring.]

Emperor. You'll be obedient;
'Tis the ex-queen retires.

[*Taking her hand, he presents her to the people.*]
See, she descends
To mingle with you and receive your loves.
Thus intermarried [*glancing toward Markwald and Iolante,*]
we shall breed a race

Will overcome the world. [*Exeunt all save Margarito and the Archbishop of Salerno.*]

Archbishop. You lag.

Margarito. He will not reach the ships till noon.
I entertain him there.

Archbishop. You note he pass'd
Betwixt two rows of corpses to the feast—
His queen look'd not more ghastly.

Margarito. I've the fleet.
Those lords [*pointing to the Sicilian train*] I'll answer for.
Can you contrive

To visit them and preach submission
To their new earthly lord?

Archbishop. I'll stir their blood.
That boy I wash'd in baptism, and now
Have stain'd the royal roses of his lips
With fond self-slander and base perjury.

Margarito. We yet will teach them truth! No whispering,
No nervous penitence; be affable;
This is a holiday: go you to church;
Welcome your monarch to its shrine. To-night
You shall confess me as the clock strikes twelve. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Porch. Enter Veronica, Adheld following.*

Veronica. Come hither, Adheld. You're my lord's fair
squire. [*He kneels and presents a letter from Celano.*]
What think you of his service, sweetest boy?

Adheld. So highly do I rate him, lady, all
He does I imitate; what he admires
I find most admirable; where he bows
In worship, I more reverently kneel.
He teaches me religion; 'tis thro' him
Mine eye drinks in divinity.

Veronica. In sooth!
Oh, these are pretty speeches in a boy.
Is 't to your taste— [*Breaking the seal of the letter.*]

Yes, fan me !—that your sister acts the part
Of servant to a Moor? Now, sweet young face,
Be frank.

Adheld. My lord by Cæsar hath been urged
To right this strangest injury :—my blood
Not long will bear the insults that are heap'd
On Madeleine.

Veronica [*passing her hand over his brow*]. We women
of the world
Can but confess to utter innocence.
I'm going now
To be familiar with you, as a child
I should take up, and sob upon his neck ;
Such trust I have in you.

Adheld. 'Tis too much grace.

Veronica. Doth the Virgin tell in Heaven what she hears
Betwixt the warm veil'd lips and Ave-sighs ?
I know she's secret. I have faith in you.
You'll hear, and you'll obey me, for you love.
My squire, I'll make you perfect in Love's arts,
And when they're yours, I'll smile to see them used
[*Sighing*] On some sweet girl I mother'd at the font.
Incredulous ! Ah !—You'll obey my words ?

Adheld. As my lord's orders.

Veronica. Then you'll never let
Your sister fall, not even as a bride,
Prey to the dread Celano. Get her housed
Safe in a nunnery. My heart implores.
I am his victim ; he refuses me
The one name that can right me. Help me,—ho !
Sweet holy Adheld as thou hop'st to take
The vows of knighthood : 'tis for my good name
I seek to be Celano's wife, the while,
Adheld, I shudder at his proffer'd love.

Adheld. Lady, you thrill such passion thro' my soul
That if it be your will the poison-draught
Should follow marriage, I am cup-bearer.

All, all that wrongs you is my enemy.

Veronica. Fair child, forget this tragedy ; be gay.

Serve me as you have opportunity.

Fail not to tell Celano how I droop,

A plant in darkness, wither'd for his sun.

I teach you no deception—falter not.

And do not miss to wait on me each day,

For comfort's sake of your pure morning face.

[*Kissing his brow.* *Exit Adheld.*]

I give him but the irony of truth.

My hair is silv'ring fast. He'll win for me

The bridal crown before this amorous wealth

Is meagre. How I win men with a smile !

The purest sees my sorrow, not my sin.

Andrea will be the Church's saint ; at least

Seduced Veronica shall take her place

'Mong holy matrons.—I am bidden forth.

[*Looking at the letter.*]

Celano holds a dance within his halls.

[*Exit within.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Council-chamber. Enter Emperor, Celano, Markwald, and others.*

Emperor. There's thunder in the air ; the chargèd wrath

Best burst from us ! Misdoubt me not ; I smelt

The sulphur in the first Sicilian breeze ;

When Margarito at the water's edge

Received us with so infinite a grace,

I mark'd him—an indomitable eye !

We put that sort of pris'ner to the sword,

Or we should never nap upon our throne

When we are sleepy. That's an eye to quench.

Markwald. You wrong him, Sire ; he's a true gentleman
Of bounteous nature.

Emperor. So you warranted.

We had not else suffer'd our noble Clare

To be affianced to him.

Celano.

Confidence

Hath a weak ankle, and the veriest stone
 Of adverse circumstance may trip it up.
 Let's test Margaritone ere we trust.
 He's amorous and free of tongue ; your wife
 Sicilian, and in wifely courage safe.
 Let them be close ; if treason's in the land,
 She'll give it us, the native accent pure.

Emperor. Good ; for this peace rots as a pestilence.
 But if the gallant lady find no plot ?

Celano. We'll hatch one.

Emperor. Set your brains to work, and have
 Your creatures ready, for I'm sick to death
 Playing the part
 Of feast-drowsed monarch, when I'm warn'd sharp steel
 Is wanted : give me pretext and I'll strike.

Markwald. Patience, my liege : Justice they say is blind,
 Impartial and not hood-winked.

Emperor. Set your dame
 To play the pining patriot.

Markwald. I will.
 As she is my true wife, her single aim
 Will be her king's security. [*Exit Markwald.*]

Emperor [*to Celano*]. You smile ?

Celano. Ha ! ha !
 The woman is not born will see such throat
 Disparted from such shoulders.

Emperor. I'm content
 With the policy in train : thanks, gentlemen.

[*Exeunt Emperor, Celano, Councillors.*]

SCENE V.—*A Room in Celano's House. Madeleine working a veil ; she pauses and looks at a picture on the wall.*

Madeleine. I thought it was Celano in his youth before
 he saw the world. He tells me 'tis his brother—still 'tis very
 ike. I wonder where is the difference ! I see—this lacks
 the funny lines about the mouth, and the eyes have not the

polish. I want to pray to this picture as to a Saint Sebastian. I drop a bead a moment for Celano's soul. No one else but Madeleine would have patience to pray him into peace again. Since that wedding-day have I slept an hour? Yet when he's penitent he'll look like this. He has the smile—and there's such a landscape in his face to light when he throws the sun on it! [*Enter Adheld.*] Dear brother!

Adheld. Where's your mistress?

Madeleine. Gone to the coast, and, Adheld, she returns no more. Celano promised me when he came back from lifting her on her horse she should not return; so your quarrel with my lord is ended, and your sister—see!—is working for her bridal.

Adheld. While the last bride is throttled by assassins.

Madeleine. Peace, brother! you forget we are betroth'd. Palermo looks on me as an injured wife.

Adheld. If betrothal hold you, there's a lady to whom Celano was betroth'd as you say, ere he mimick'd love in your eyes—a lady whom, by force or some vile sorcery, he hath dishonour'd and keeps shame-gagg'd in her misery.

Madeleine. Some beauty that tempted:—he's not betroth'd.

Adheld. Little tortoise-skull! how is it with your heart? Can one tread on it and leave no stain on the foot? Toss it to yon villains paving the street! I tell you, had you any faith or charity, you'd refuse him, take that veil, and give yourself to Christ.

Madeleine. I cannot think—

Adheld. True, you fat flesh-heap! If Celano gave you a piece of gold and show'd you the very blood that purchased it, you'd say he got it honestly. I tell you, as Celano is my master, I serve him; but you, as you are Heaven's bond-maid, must disown him. He comes. Madeleine, work my will in this. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter Celano.*]

Celano. Well, Madeleine, what says the boy to you?

Madeleine. He wishes me to take the veil.

Celano. Oh, then
Tis lightly done. I loose you from the bond
Of my pre-contract with you.

Madeleine. You consent?

Celano. I do not force you ; since the Emperor
Takes int'rest in you, I consult his will ;
And if it be that I should marry you,
I shall do't as I should take a city ; if
Meanwhile you do not wed yourself to Heaven.

Madeleine. You ask a vessel, would it profit her
Remove the helm and with a childish crew
Drift on the waves ! Give my unguided life
Your merciful direction.

Celano. Madeleine,
To-day I'm busy. Tell me what that boy
Was urging on you : be obedient.

Madeleine. He said you'd wrong'd a lady who desired
That you should wed her ; and he threaten'd me
Because of that I should not be your wife.

Celano. Call Adheld—and you, tell your rosary.

[*Exit Madeleine, returning with Adheld.*
[*To Madeleine.*] If you like, listen. Adheld, you have kiss'd
Veronica's fair hand and felt the dew
Of her most excellent tears across her cheek.
You're ripe to poison me at her command.
Nay, blush not ; I read clear ; all's fair in love.
It is an arrant sorceress ! My boy,
You think I've wrong'd her. Look upon that face,

[*Pointing to the picture.*

Or cross the street and ask for Andrea
The priest who tends yon altar. Learn of him
Who to dishonour brought the stateliest girl
Man ever worshipp'd. I, my Adheld, sought
To wed her, and she mock'd me.

Adheld. Dear my lord,
It was her modesty ; she could not speak
The past ; she's clear ! So look the saints whose robes

Are dyed in blood ; she'd stain her purity
With penitential tears.

Celano. Poor child, you're snared.
You'd strive to force me wed the loveliest bride
Sicilia ever grew her myrtles for.
Your artifice I smile at. Madeleine,
Will you be sway'd by me, or . . .

Madeleine. I am yours—
I was. You never were betroth'd to *her*—
Lady Veronica ?

Celano. Then we'll not fix
The day of your espousal—to the Lord ?

Adheld [*to Madeleine*]. Have you no pity ? May your
hard heart rot

Each day by morsels. Dear my lord have grace,
Give to the great Veronica the hand
Alone can hold her from abysmal shame.

Celano. Adheld, my honourable sentiments
To your sister half deter me.

Adheld. Do not call
So mean a thing my sister ! Of my blood
She is not, but a slave to her own lust.

[*Exit.*

Celano. Pray for me, Madeleine.

[*Exit.*

Madeleine. He looks to me for salvation. My duty is
plain ; this veil must be his bride's to save him from the
snare of the evil woman. I will pray for him till my tongue
swoons ! Oh, what peril to him from the creature who could
stain the innocence of the Church's holy son. Thank
Heaven, I'm fast betroth'd. I'll leave this vanity [*gathering
up her work*] to pray him white as he was ere he went to
court [*looking at the picture*]. A very seraph's brow !

[*Kisses it, and exit.*

[*Re-enter Adheld wildly.*]

Adheld. A damnèd monk !

SCENE VI.—*A Hall. Enter Markwald and Iolante.*

Markwald. Iolante, 'tis my wish that you to-day
Greet Margarito, for whom Clara sighs,
And let him see young William ; note his mood,
If with the sight it alter.

Iolante. This is strange ;
You banish'd Margarito from your house.

Markwald. Orders are now reversed. You are not glad
Again to be his hostess ?

Iolante. Not his spy.
It is unworthy of you, dear my lord,
To put your Iolante to such use,
That you no more can teach her to fulfil
Than train an innocent, glad singing-bird
Hawk-wise to fix and fasten on its prey.
You keep your Iolante for delight
I' the music that she makes you ; not at all
To loose from wrist that she may bear you back
The quarry of your bleeding enemies.

Markwald. Is Margarito then an enemy ?

Iolante [*laughing*]. Of whom ?—the Emperor ?

Markwald. He comes. Obey. [*Exit.*

Iolante. What means my lord to put me in this strait ?

[*Attendants lead in Prince William.*]

They bring the boy : *he* shall not look on him ;
There's that in 's face must grow to royalty,
And it might tempt . . .

Prince William. Mutter !

Iolante. A German word !
So good at learning !—There, sweet boy, enough !
I'm sick to-day, and cannot stay to spell
The bright page of the missal : to the priest !

[*Exit Prince William and Attendants.*

[*Listening.*] He's found the child—I catch the tenderness
Of voice. We will not speak of him at all.

[*Enter Margarito.*]

Margarito. Iolante, are you here alone?—in tears?

Iolante. Sybilla . . .

Margarito. Not Sybilla, Sicily

Forgets the child she bore.

Iolante. I'm Markwald's wife—

Even regret is treason in report.

In mine ear's treasury whate'er is cast

Is wealth my lord distributes at his will.

Margarito. You tell me that in the Sicilian tongue?

What, use it as a traitor?

Iolante. Not so grave!

Wives forget every bond when once they wear

This pledge—

Margarito. Oh, tell me—do our slaves in chains

So forget freedom?—Iolante, say,

Why am I summon'd?

Iolante. My lord summon'd you;

For what I know not.

Margarito. And can scarce devise

A hasty welcome.—What is that you do?

Iolante. A shirt I'm making for my foster-child.

These cares are new to me, and cost some tears,

For I am sonless, and my pretty guest

Is going to a convent.

Margarito. What! your prince?

Iolante. Tush, tush!

It's the child I'm thinking of; so delicate!

He's rooted in my heart; transplanting him,

So frail a slip, to rougher Earth—

Margarito [*drawing Iolante to the window*]. Look there!

The child, who owns that:—all that jewelry

Of sea, the shining marble of these roofs,

Iolante, is preparing for the cowl?

[*Markwald and Celano enter unseen.*]

Celano. Stay! With what fix'd eyes they are looking
down

On the city! How he turns to make appeal!

Markwald, pass on : *you know she'll tell you all.* [*Exeunt.*

Iolante. Distrust me, I beseech—I must report—

Margarito. Sweet patriot, do not so belie yourself.

Iolante [*turning round on him*]. I swear to you I will be ever true

To noble Markwald ; you, I straight dismiss

For daring utter to me words no wife

Must listen to :—this is the only lie

To save betrayal. Go ! [*Exit Margarito.*

[*Enter Markwald.*]

Markwald. Have you obey'd ?

Iolante. My lord, I've wholly fail'd to play my part.

Margaritone has a lover's way ;

And, ere we enter'd into grave discourse,

He put into his gestures and his tones

What well I know my Markwald would not like,

So I have straight dismiss'd him.

Markwald.

When you stood

Together, looking at the city, then

Were you dismissing him ?

Iolante.

Even then in thought.

I did not summon him. I cannot play

The spy—be mask'd to my old friends. My lord,

Christmas is coming on, and the great feast

For which I am not able. Let me go

To our little sea-side villa. There I'll stay

Where I can bring no harm to those I love.

Markwald. Who are they, *Iolante* ?

Iolante.

You, my lord ;

Margaritone as a countryman—

The child, all these. I have a parting charge

To make to you : trust, trust the Admiral

In all state matters, and beware of him

As rival. I'm o'er-scrupulous. You think

A married woman must not hear a word

Of praise from any but her lord. *I won't.*

So pray you put me beyond reach ; for here

I must be much where my young countryman
Frequents—

Markwald. Capricious fancy! Well then, go . . .
And I must keep the feast without my wife.
Your talk was then of personal affairs?

Iolante. Yes!—

Markwald. Clare shall go.

Iolante. Margaritone sure
Will seek to see her. I must be alone.
Leave Clara here.

Markwald [aside]. The man is doom'd.—No, no.
You'll go together. I will see you start
This afternoon. There's myst'ry in my wife; [*Exit Iolante.*
I would she had my sister's honesty! [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Room in a little lonely Villa. Andrea pacing up and down.*

Andrea. I am bidden here
To one of his poor victims. Should he ask
My priestly aid, I must confess him, yea,
Wash from his soul the spots I'd have hell-fires
Burn deep to ingrain'd devil. I must hear
Of amorous encounters, while my hands
Clutch the cold crucifix ; mine unpurged blood
Will leap responsive to the sin my lips
Scourge with prescription of unnumber'd pray'rs.
Oh yet

There was a whiteness and a glory in
My way of ruin. On the rosary
I tell the minutes of that sacred hour.
My lady stoop'd
To teach me love, as she had taught a child
The missal's pages ; since, illiterate,
The gold and crimson story would be lost
To eyes so bright with wonder.—Ah, she comes !

[*Enter Azaire, pale, with a child in her arms.*]

A temptress beauty, no Madonna, tho'
She clasps a glorious babe.

Azaire. He promised me
You would be kind, you are his brother—this,
This child, I bring for baptism his son ;

He'll see her eyes again in the dark boy
She bore him ; let him love the young Azairé !
*[Lays the child at his feet ; as he raises it, she turns back,
stretches her arms to it, and rushes out.]*

Andrea [turning from the child]. What mockery!

Our Andrea had sprung from gentlest blood—

The tiny waxen figure put to sleep

On a nun's virgin pallet ! Ah, my son,

My Andrea, we're buried from her breast,

Dead both of us, murder'd for modesty ;

And when with fasts I strive to purge myself

From mem'ry of my manhood's sweetest days,

I see thee lying in thy little tomb

And fall upon thy innocence to weep.

So easily

Thy breath was stopp'd. Thou liest in the arms

Of Death, thy foster-nurse, mistaking her

For thine own mother. One may kill a babe ;

But never curb the pulses of a man

To a priest's ambling pace. Veronica,

So cold, so hard thou think'st me, and I burn.

I must away where women are not heard ;

Their silver voices at confessional

Thrill me like music. I must take the cowl,

Be where rough, angular, begrimed monks

Will make me loathe my own condition.

Meanwhile—[*Pausing before the child.*] Oh, he has children
at desire :

Yet when he found Veronica in hope

Of motherhood, he came with ashen face,

Told me to hide her in a nunnery,

He would provide a coffin for my child.

Nay more, he would forgive my treachery,

Promote me in the Church, when he had scourged

By private shame his dearer penitent,

Would haply right her—but he plays her false.

He'll work the ruin of her soul. O God,

Mete out to me the measure of Thy wrath
In purgatorial fires : singe not Thy dove,
For I who touch'd her silver plumes well know
They cannot tarnish : mix them with the wings
Of angels, Thou wilt lose them in the white ;
Then turn Thy unappeasèd face on me.
I shall not weary of my punishment
So she escape. To-day I take the cowl.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber. Enter Celano, a miniature in his hand and a roll of parchment.*

Celano [*looking at the portrait*]. Veronica,
Thou'lt write at my dictation words that doom
Thy dearest countryman ; thou shalt be false
To every creature that thou lovest, ere
I pardon thy great treason with my name.
How I remember when I was a boy
I thought all Heaven's blue was in those eyes.
[*Putting up the miniature.*] Had she been spotless, I had
been her slave

Who am her subtle tyrant ; yet no pain
I can inflict on her can touch the hurt
She wrought upon my nature. Here's the king,
Who thinks I work to pleasure him.

[Enter Emperor and Markwald.]

Emperor. What news?
Those rolls of parchment—Markwald, my worst fears
Celano's searches have confirm'd ; he's found
A document that tells the truth as frank
As witness under pressure of the screw,
Revealing all.

Markwald. Then is the writing forged.

Celano. So I surmise ; yet it may yield a clue ;
My spies shall fathom it. Within a week
We'll sit in judgment on a ripe revolt,
We will discover all.

Markwald. *By honest means.*

My lord, I like not subterfuge.

Celano.

Although

You use a spy, your wife ! What news through her
Of the Lord Admiral ?

Markwald.

She's sick, retired.

Celano [*persistently*].

Through Clare ?

Markwald. What ! set a girl to wreck her love ?

I'll not believe Margaritone's false ;

[*Aside to Celano.*] You force the king against him. [*Aloud.*]

If we thus

Suspect and harass, we shall make him vile.

Celano. I see you've no suspicion. Painful scenes

Must follow on this plot's discovery

I fain would spare you knowledge . . .

Markwald.

Painful scenes !

If Iolante's self

Were brought before me as a traitor, I

Would doom her to a traitor's death, I swear,

Nor ever flinch. What angers me is this :

You put disloyal thoughts in simple heads.

The people here are happy in the thought

Of keeping festival with their good king ;

Celano, rack your brains to give them sport.

Spy on the revels, and no deed of blood

Will need your censorship.

Celano [*to Emperor.*]

Will you appoint,

My liege, when I of southern treachery

Bring proof, this fearless and impartial judge,

The uncorrupted Markwald, to assign

The several punishments

To the discover'd wretches : misery

Will be enough to me in leading them

Into their toils : let Markwald seal their doom.

Emperor. Markwald shall be our grand justiciary.

Markwald. I will : Celano, use you lawful means ;

See I condemn you not for stirring up

Sedition.

Celano. See you have not to condemn
Those you hold dearest to you. Have a care. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*An Ante-chamber to a large Ball-room in Celano's House. Celano, exquisitely attired, watches from a distance the dancers. Veronica passes.*

Celano. What a flower she is, a balsam ! We are each masters in the art of winning men's souls—I to perdition, she to a fool's paradise ! She thinks to bring me to her feet a victim ; she shall lie at mine ; though the landscape be fair, *that* to a conqueror's eye means desolation. I'll change the face of that fair country her body ;—no respite till ruin bring her to subjection. She's dancing with Margarito ; I like not the dominance of that grasp. Should he win her, I were baulked. Now he's offering her jasmine ; that jasmine she shall tread under foot before sunrise.

[*Enter a Page.*]

Page [*presenting letter*]. My lord !

Celano [*reading*]. "The lady who calls herself your wife brought to me two days ago her babe for baptism. The attendants who followed her report, as I suspect to order, that they found her asleep under a cactus, a snake coiled about her loins. I send you your son, having performed for him the rites of the Church, in the charge of a young woman Madeleine, who claims to be, by your authority, his nurse."

Celano [*aside*]. It's perfect. I secure her [*looking towards Veronica*]. Weary now, warm and a little love-faint ! The room clears. The adieus ! Does Margarito stoop low to smell the jasmine that his lips bend over it ? He's gone. [*To Page.*] This to the lady. Bring her back. [*Page returns with Veronica.*] You've been dancing with a traitor.

Veronica. You mistake ;

I danced with you ; and the Lord Admiral
For pity : there are dark lines round his eyes
For Iolante ; wherefore is she gone ?

Celano. Faugh ! How that jasmine-tuft infects the air !

Unloose it ; trample it beneath your foot.
Obedience ! your toilet I will make.
I hate the dull, white stars.

Veronica. How exquisite
Your sense of fitness ; it's a wither'd flow'r,
And gives a look of tire and negligence
To one unweary.

Celano [*taking a gem from his dress*]. Here's a brooch
for you ;

An amethyst best sets those moon-white breasts.
Now I can speak with you, I say, "Beware
The pestilence that walks in darkness." Think ;
One least speck of disloyalty would doom
Your body to the dead-house.

Veronica. Sure, the wine
Hath wrought upon you. Never had the king
A smoother front. All's well.

Celano [*drawing out some letters*]. This pocketful
Of letters will condemn the Admiral
To death—and the Archbishop.

Veronica. They are forged !

Celano. Well guess'd, fair Casuistry. The ink is wet
Wherewith I penn'd them. I have left a page
For you to fill.

Veronica. What mean you?

Celano. This: I need
Your writing—just the witness of your hand.
Write a few lines of warning—let them speak
Of loyalty—to Margarito. That
You will not do? I bid you think again.

Veronica. Never !

Celano. The lover of the German girl
Is dear to you. You've seen two German maids
Preferred before you—Madeleine and Clare.

Veronica. My lord is over-wearied, and his wits
Do him dis-service. I will take my leave.

Celano. You scorn such rivals, but Azaire held sway

Over Celano's heart and—do not turn
 From sweet blanch'd rose to snowdrop—and Azaire
 Is dead. This is no forgery. To-night
 The Court shall hear of it. Veronica,
 If with those clear eyes you look'd up to me
 And said this matter'd not, the words were forged.
 Be not a perjurer.

Veronica [*trying to free herself*]. You're keeping me
 Unduly for a guest.

Celano. With lover's trust
 I'm treating you : to-morrow I depart
 In haste to my wife's funeral. You can
 Report to Margarito all I've said
 Before the feast when I present the king
 With these forged letters. You will not do this !
 If implicated in this plot you ne'er
 Can be Celano's bride, who—how you shake !—
 Aspires to the high honour of your hand.
 All know this ring ; wear it as my betroth'd.

Veronica. On what conditions ?

Celano. Simply write a note
 To Margarito ; warn him 'gainst revolt.
 Say that the Germans seek Sicilia's good,
 And those are traitors who defeat their ends.

Veronica. So I have ever thought ; I would not stir
 In any foolish rising. You exact
 No more of me than this—I take the ring
 And with it on my finger pen the words
 Of your dictation. [*Sits down and writes.*]

Celano. 'Tis to exculpate
 You from participation in the crime ;
 And if I find you faithful, instantly,
 When Sicily is humbled, as reward
 For the better part you've chosen, you shall be
 Led to the priest.

Veronica [*looking at the ring and kissing it*]. The gem is
 exquisite.

Celano. I've seen you watch it flash across my hand,
With envy—half-contempt : tho' smooth enough,
My hands have not that rare transparency
That makes flesh spiritual enough for these
Moon-opals. Are you proud?

Veronica. Vain-glorious
As you are of your will. Farewell, my lord.

[Gives him her jewelled hand to kiss. Exit.]

Celano. Country and lover yields she to her lust
Of pow'r. I have the strategist's delight
In circumventing her ; how great her fall !
Azaire, cup-bearer of the wine of life—
Azaire—she loved me for my handsome curls
And smiling lips, loved me as man, and I
Made her my wife therefore—while Madeleine—
She is my slave. Veronica! Oh, I
Reserve for her a place. *[To Attendants.]* Bring me my boy.

[Enter Madeleine with the child.]

Madeleine. The baby sleeps.

Celano. 'Tis a sign'd picture, this ;
Myself new-wrought in flesh. My fatherhood
Is past suspicion ; these dark lashes hide
Haply his mother's eyes. Ah, keep them closed !
The child is well ! Now, Madeleine, you know
What, as a sign of the respect I bear
To you, as faithful servant of my will,
I hold your due.

Madeleine. My lord, it is enough
That I may nurse the child.

Celano. 'Tis *not* enough.
You shall be made his step-mother. You know
Of old we were betroth'd. A priest is here
To make the marriage firm. I may not vex
The king with private matters ; for the nonce
You shall have rooms and tendance for the child,
But not until you have full wedding-right
To rule as mistress o'er it. In a month

I promise you open acknowledgment.
 Put off your terror. 'Tis not to the rack
 I'm leading you. Why here upon your neck
 Is the little band of peach-stones that I set
 Under the crucifix. Poor child, I've made
 Your love a cross to you. But you consent,
 Good Madeleine, to be my lawful wife?

Madeleine. My lord, you are betroth'd to me. I do
 No wrong to poor Azaire, if I comply.

Celano. The priest will meet us in the chapel. Come.

SCENE IV.—*Room in Margarito's House. Enter Margarito
 and the Archbishop of Salerno.*

Archbishop. There must be secrecy.

Margarito. My lord, not a feather in our plumes must be
 dashed, not a tongue shall be padded, our horses' hoofs shall
 clink on the stones and our voices be heard through the open
 casement to the last.

Archbishop. I, as it were in a reverie, will look round.
 Con you the names on the scroll [*looking out cautiously*].
 That ringing voice is for a rouse. If the hen clucks she's
 not on her nest hatching treason. All the same I'll spy.
 Ah, a wedding! They were marrying and giving in mar-
 riage till the last day. Tessa, my child! [*A Servant-
 maiden appears at a chamber window.*] A troop of soldiers!
 One looks up, he marks the house; he winks.

[*Enter Fool below; looks up laughing.*]

Fool. My lord, you've a waiting-woman would kiss a fool.
 Think you not the race should be celibate? Indeed, 'tis
 probable Holy Church forbids fatherhood to the priest lest
 he perpetuate folly.

Archbishop. My knave, what see'st thou, whom seekest
 thou?

Fool. What see I? Tessa gaping at the bride. Get in
 and chide her, holy father. . . . And yet more distinctly
 I see the doves on the housetop.

Archbishop. Do not stare so at the house. Have you business here?

Fool. Aye, with the Lord Margarito ; a fool has always business with lovers, for their whole business is fooling.

Archbishop. Pass in, pass in ; do not whistle. There ! On tip-toe !

[*Enter Fool, presenting a letter.*]

Margarito [*covering the scroll with his mantle*]. News from my love !

Archbishop [*aside, impatiently*]. And a kingdom must wait a lover's leisure ! See how his long fingers dally with the seal. [*Aloud.*] Break it ! 'Tis the light heart of woman, dry and brittle ; 'twill not bleed.

Margarito [*aside*]. She's gone, my lady Iolante. [*Aloud.*] The rare Teuton wench denies me the light of her eyes [*carelessly handing the letter to the Archbishop.*] [*To Fool.*] Go.

Fool. I've none to play with now the little prince is cowed and looks at the free birds as he strings his paternosters.

Margarito. Tessa's a fairer toy [*motions impatiently to him to go*].

Fool [*aside*]. The very blink
Of traitors in their eyes.—God prosper you ;
Prosper you—

Margarito. How now ? What is 't thou dost say ?

Fool [*mockingly*]. Nothing but "God be with you, gentlemen."
[*Exit.*]

Archbishop [*reading*]. "Iolante and I have retired to my brother's villa by the bay, for Iolante is sick and wearied of the Court, and I am ordered to accompany her. See we be not too lonely." That's near the convent where the boy is hidden. The monks are all Sicilian and true to their royal novice— save the German abbot.

Margarito. I'll adventure it ! A ride to the monastery, a secret meeting with my hooded countrymen, and the child is mine. I'll take him to the caves by the sea, and the lady

Iolante shall receive him in her lonely villa. She'll keep the prince till we come to possess him of his royalties—and I pay a visit to my love! Thou art fervid for thy country; 'tis by chance thou favourest a lover's zeal.

Archbishop. How sayest thou? Pour out our plans with thy love-sighs! I'll not consent.

Margarito. She'll cleave to me as my ring to her finger. Well, my lord archbishop, all is ready. The fleet is mine; every ruddy sail flaps to Sicilian air, and feels the thrill of its freedom. The gates are in the hands of the Germans; but here's a key Sicilians can use. This scroll contains all names of note in the land, and they are all sworn to our enterprise. The prince I secure; Iolante keeps him. So our enemies will search the convent in vain. The child stole away from his prayers; would not suffer discipline and made escape through a cleft in the wall: the brethren shall be dolorously searching for him when the creatures of the Emperor arrive. We are safe. Look not so mournful. 'Tis thy manner. The owl smiles not though the weather shines. Thou art haughty before the people; show thy pride in the face of thy fears.

Archbishop. Go to thy ships. The cathedral bell is calling for vespers and the holy feast approaches. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Garden before Veronica's House : moonlight.
Veronica and Margarito on a terrace overlooking the
landscape.*

Margarito. Fair lady, we have memories ;—that day
We gather'd figs 'neath the caruba-tree,
Gathering and giving—therefore I am come
To bid farewell, before I ride to-night
In chase of the little cruel recreant love
Deserting me. You're right ; the moon shines fair,
Thrown as a bridal-veil across the land.
Do you love
Your land, Veronica ?

Veronica. Look at that peace,
The trellis'd gold of the vines, the lucid hills,
Those peasants singing as they saunter home.
I think

The moonlight comes that we may see our land
Lying asleep. Look, Margarito, look !

Margarito. I feel her breath
On my brow,—Sicilia's breath ! So sweet a slave
Chain'd to the ravisher ? I am a man ;
That sight unsheathes my sword.

Veronica. My patriot !

[Pressing back his sword into the scabbard.]

Margarito. You'd spare your country's enemies ?

Veronica.

I'd spare

Virgilia and her goats ; those fishermen
Toiling at sea ; the simple peasant wives

Who laugh even at their prayers—

Margarito. And would not cry
If widow'd by the Teuton.

Veronica. Just beyond
That light-irradiated chasm rests
Iolante . . . and your love.

Margarito [laughing as he mounts his horse]. You mean
my love,

The Lady Iolante ! Fare you well.

Veronica [looking after him]. How hard I'm getting !
I can see him go,

And so I could to the headsman. I am hard ;

I'm growing worthy of Celano's bride.

How the jewel flashes ! I have kept it hid.

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Villa. Iolante and Clara at work.*

Iolante. I'm tired of stitching daisies, and you sit
Like Nature at her meadows. Well-a-day,
Good Sis, I've little patience ! Hark, who raps ? [Knocking.
I'd greet a mouse.

[Enter Attendant and Messenger.]

Attendant. The trusty coxcomb there
Alone may give his letter to your hand.

Iolante. Worthy obedience ! My servant's tongue
Improves your virtue serving it with taunts,
As bitter herbs give relish to our meat.
You shall be entertain'd.

Messenger. Good mistress—no,
I must not tarry.

Iolante [to Attendant]. Take him to the gate. [Exeunt.
Put down your work. Would you be glad to see
Your love to-night ?

Clara. I never loved him so
As when he walk'd with me, here in the fields.
It seem'd to me, tho' I'm a simple girl,

He had that trust in me that Markwald shows
To you—his wife. I care not to be teased
And play'd with as some girls.

Iolante. And you were proud?

Clara. Yes—of his trust.

Iolante. And worthy of it, Clare?

Clara. Try me.

Iolante. I will. Read this:—

“Gracious and beloved Iolante,

Your prince asks pity. Can you withhold that milk of the heart from your country's orphan? His hiding-place must not be known—I have chosen the low caves. Bring Clare with you. I can trust my love. I await you at sunset.

Margarito.”

Clara. I cannot go. Why did you let me hear
Of such a thing?—Treason!

Iolante. You will not come?
You've no response to that? False girl!

Clara. False wife!

Iolante. Markwald, my lord!—and, oh, Sicilia!
And more than that a prince, and fugitive!

Clara. Have others then no country and no bonds?
If you forget your duty as a wife
To gratify a young compatriot,
Despise me not that simply I renounce
A lover rather than forget my blood
And all it binds me to. Beyond all this,
I'm Markwald's sister, think before you thus
Betray him.

Iolante. I have thought: for in our life's
Most sudden tempest there's the lightning-flash,—
Torch of an instant!—all is seen and judged.
I'll not betray my country; and my lord,
My noble husband, will not be betray'd
If to his wife I'm true.—You will not come.
A trust, remember. Do you love him, Clare?

Clara. You then forget!

Iolante. I see you will not come;
 You're sewing. [Exit.
Clara. 'Tis a plot. That's treachery.
 I will not keep a traitor's confidence
 That is a snare under my people's feet.
 I'll write and send my German page to town;
 Sunset will not be here for seven hours. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*Enter the Emperor and Celano.*

Celano. These letters state the bargain which my brain
 Hath struck with greedy Death—the written bonds
 That pledge full many lives to sudden tombs.

Emperor. Let's see! I read elated.—Markwald comes
 With knotted brow. He fears your subtility.
 [Enter Markwald.]

Celano. He's for the battle-axe and honesty,
 No toils, no snares, no scaffold.

Emperor. How now, Mark?

Markwald. I have a paper—to be read aloud—
 'Tis from my sister—says: "This very eve
 William and Margarito seek the cave
 Under our pines. Arrest them."

Emperor. Noble lass!
 Why look you so aghasted? We will find
 Among our Dukes a nobler groom by far
 Than this vile Admiral.

Celano. Who's written this? [Snatching the letter.
 The Lady Iolante without doubt
 Knew of the secret and . . .

Markwald [moodily]. The hand is Clare's.
 I'm not a man for motives and surmise—
 Absolute blank, where I can learn no facts.
 And I beseech you, Sire, by all my sword
 Hath wrought for you, and by my loyalty
 Mine and my sister's, you impute no ill
 Where you can have no knowledge. I myself

Arrest the traitors.

Celano. You ! Oh, pardon me.
You are too heated. More, there is a pledge,
An oath ta'en you should be justiciary
In clearing off these treasons.

Markwald. So I will.
Go, search my house—bring each to his account
Of all within. Do not let one be spared.
[*Aside.*] Oh !—*Iolante*, I shall be your judge.—
I must give orders. Lead me to my house.

[*He moves away tottering.*]

Celano. Sybilla and her daughters are involved.

Emperor. Let them be all confined.

Markwald [*returning*]. Sybilla, Sire,
Sicken'd for death when we removed her child.
Doubtless the blow has stunn'd her ; better leave
That agèd creature in her misery—
It's burning down to ash.

Emperor. 'Twill be rare sport
To stir the embers ; the dull'd flames will hiss
And crackle fierce, I warrant. Hither ! [*To Attendant.*]

Markwald. Leave
The crownless woman to die undisturb'd.

Emperor. No words for rebels.

Markwald. None. [*Aside.*] My heart is dead.
[*Exit Markwald*]

Emperor. Peter, I like not this remorseful mood.

[*Walks about uneasily.*]

Celano [*busily turning over his letters*]. My brain may
rest : no need of forgery.
In Clara's warning we've a real plot.
Yet will I make it seem that all along
I had instinctive knowledge of their schemes.
And this my painful scribbling [*putting back the letters in
his breast*] will avail
To humble my Veronica. I'll keep
These pretty running lines in which she's sold

Her birthright as Sicilian. She is mine :
 The country I apportion her is Hell—
 Confinement at my pleasure in its flames ;
 With just a hope across the gulf to catch
 Sight of a paradise within my arms.

[*Aloud.*] My lord, I must confess to you I feign'd
 Creative faculty : for full four days
 I have with diligence by piecemeal learnt
 All that is here devised. This note confirms
 My worst suspicions of Salerno's guilt.
 I set your childish fool a spy to watch
 The Archbishop, whom he hates for getting him
 Whipt 'fore the Court ; and he reports the two
 Have constantly been closeted.—The lad

[*The Emperor turns away with knitted brows.*]

Will get revenged upon his enemy,
 But lose his playmate in the pretty prince
 He dotes on with a fool's capacity.
 It takes much science to secure revenge
 Without some personal discomfiture.

[*Aloud.*] Salerno, Margarito, *Markwald*,—Sire,
 You'll think I am suspicious—we must watch.

Emperor. It's that old hag, Sybilla ! Honest Mark
 Against the charms of discrown'd royalty
 Is scarcely proof ; the boy must be immured
 Deep in an Alpine fortress ; for the rest,
 Though he enrages me, I'll not withdraw
 My faith in him ; he's German to the bone,

[*Enter Constantia.*]

As German as my fair Constantia here
 Is rank Sicilian. Give us leave awhile.

Celano. I'll warn the guards and captains.

[*Exit.*]

Emperor.

This revolt

I'll quell with iron heel within my house.
 The Lady Iolante has of late
 Been much about the Empress. Women here
 Breed thoughts as they were men. I'll put her back

To her own woman's use.—How now ! in tears ?
You should not leave your rooms ; your modesty
Keeps you a pris'ner till you give a prince
To me and to your country.

Constantia. Sweet my lord,
I've given her a prince imperial
In you, and now, thus suppliant at your feet,
Beseech you look upon my woman-land,
Wild, ardent, dreaming, full of tenderness,
As if she were Constantia ! Comfort her,
Assure her that the blood of her brave sons
By you shall be held sacred as the life,
Trembling within me, of your kingdom's heir.

Emperor. Oh, pretty speeches ! Have you practised
them
Among your girls ? Such cunning eloquence
Moves admiration. I will rule my wife
By German custom : you shall breed me babes
And wanton in the nursery : on days
Of state you shall ride with me round the town,
And what I will shall be your pleasure, if
It be to sack Palermo. Once for all
Leave policy and punishment to me.

Constantia. You swore—
You promised me, if I would yield my rights
And be your wife, you would espouse my land
And cherish her.

Emperor. Ha, ha ! A pretty wit !
And I will keep my word. I govern you
As I will govern your Sicilian land,
Most *absolutely*—you're the stuff for it,
Fickle and tender and irresolute.

Constantia. The stuff for making slaves ! You've chosen
me
A mother for your son.

Emperor. To see him through
His teething, set him on his legs, as soon

As he can prattle I will tutor him.

[*A Messenger enters at the door.*]

You're for the swaddling clothes. . . .

Messenger.

My liege, the lord

Celano urgently implores you give

Him instant conference.

Emperor [turning to Constantia, raising and hastily kissing her]. Oh, then a kiss

And pardon.

[*Exit with Messenger.*]

Constantia. I have cursed him on the lips.

Are men so mad to put into our hands

Such arms against them as I carry sheath'd

In my frail body's scabbard. I will bear

A prince to Sicily; he shall be great

And glorious the fervid southern way;

My own despised Sicilian he shall woo,

And as a bride be-jewel with his songs;

His court shall be the splendour of the world,

The sun of nations; men shall say of him,

"Constantia was unfaithful to her spouse;

He bears no impress of his German sire."

[*Beating her breast.*] Here, here, in closest privacy we'll hatch

Our treasons, my unborn avenger, *here*

Shall be conspiracy. Oh, I am weak

Even to the mortal hour, yet mightier

Than an earth-cov'ring host; for Motherhood,

That ancient Power with rights mysterious,

Won by fell Nature for her womankind,

Receives my injuries. [*Noise of arms without.*] They're arming men;—

My child, we'll leave them to their battle-fields;

They may determine history; the fate

Of nations we will settle, thou and I.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Cave. Enter Margarito and Prince William.*

Margarito. Boy, are you cold?

Prince William.

Why yes, my feet.

Margarito.

We'll walk.

Take care of the rough stones.

Prince William.

How dark it is!

So stiff and dark above our heads, I think

The ground that roofs our graves must look like that

When we are buried.

Margarito.

Nay, nay,—not at all.

The grave hath got no hole within its side.

Prince William. It had one when they put the dead
man in.

I've seen it—a black hole.

Margarito.

And this is blue—

With what the sexton sees when in a grave,

The sky! Cursed thought! I will not tell the boy—

Come, we will nearer to the entrance, so!

I like not stifling fumes of underground.

Lift me yon stone. Heroes have lifted such.

That's bravely tried!

[*Enter Iolante.*]

Prince William.

Mother!

Margarito.

Where is my love?

Iolante. She's no Sicilian; do not look for *her*.

Margarito. Iolante, you reproach me!

Iolante.

You divorce

Me from my husband. It were easier

Refuse a newly-orphan'd babe the breast,

Than a sweet outcast prince my refuge-arms.

Yet, Margarito, yet I never had

One traitor thought. Why do you ruin me?

Margarito. Oh, perfect image of Sicilia's self

Guarding her child! Why that is natural—

The cursèd German girl! Oh, the vile horde!

Iolante. Now, my brave Markwald, were you here, that lie
Were back i' the speaker's throat. I'll keep the child,
Leave him to me.

Margarito. You have no sympathy?
Do you not say "God-speed" nor even "Farewell."
If Clare is false it may be all's betray'd;
This our last meeting. *Iolante*—Oh!—
Have you no "Addio"?

Iolante. Heaven shield the right!

Margarito. And *me*.—I am Sicilia's hope.

Iolante. I feel
All's lost. Oh, *Margarito*, haste thee, fly
To Africa.—Thou hast unlawful thoughts.

Prince William. There's some one coming.

Iolante. I'll defend the child.

Margarito. Lost! They are arm'd.

[*Enter Markwald and Soldiers.*]

Markwald [*aside*]. A show of innocence—
That child between them as a sword to make
Dolts of my eyes. Ah, I have driven snow
Over her wanton cheeks!—They're traitors all.
[*To Soldiers.*] Advance!

Margarito. Stand!

Markwald. Never trust Sicilian tongue
He means no vain defence. Advance!

[*They engage. Margarito's sword is broken.*]

Margarito. There cracks
One of thy heart-strings, Freedom! [*He is secured.*]

Markwald [*to a Soldier*]. Let me pass.

Soldier. I'm wounded.

Markwald. Yes.—Captain, secure them.—Come [*to Iolante*].
With me. I would not have you manacled.

Iolante. Markwald, the boy is innocent.

Markwald. And you?

Iolante. Am ready for my punishment. You must
Bear me away. I swoon.

Margarito. Upon my soul,
Her innocence is twice the child's.

Markwald. You taint
The wind, sir ; not my ear. The prisons : on ! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Palermo. A Court of Justice. Enter Emperor, Markwald as Justiciary, Peter de Celano, Lords and Ladies, the Fool, the Archbishop of Salerno, Sybilla and her children, Iolante and Margarito attended.*

Markwald. The court is open. This revolt had wrought
Destruction to our rule ; ruin as swift
Fall on the workers' heads ! Our loyalty
(That virtue gave Christ heart to be a King)
Is lost. You, proud Archbishop, have been proved
The root of this offence by witnesses
That my authority may not impugn ;
And I condemn you to the death most meet
For such desert—

Fool [to Celano]. Oh, hang him by the leg !

Celano. His extreme haughtiness deserves reproof ;
He'd suffer none before him.

Emperor. Put him *last*.
Harness him to his courser's tail, and then,
Fool, his remains shall be thy heritage ;
This the first property I've given thee.

Archbishop [as he passes out to Celano]. I'd done the
same by you, and may in Hell. [*Exit attended.*]

Markwald. For Queen Sybilla, she hath done no wrong.
No : nor her daughters.

Celano [to Emperor]. Do you mark that, sire ?
He'd win a gentle sentence for the queen
To save his wife ; he hesitates and doubts.

Emperor. I note him : do not interpose.

Markwald. Therefore

Let her remain in mild imprisonment
With her three daughters. For this kingdom's peace
Young William must be guarded ; it may be
Prudent to keep him in an Alpine hold,
Where lawless rebels may not penetrate
To seize his person.

Iolante [aside]. Oh, my lord turns pale !
He loves the boy : my Markwald, what he bears !

Emperor. Too lenient ! Mine the usurper's child !
And to no charge I'll yield him till he is
A prince no man will fight for. Take him out.
I will attend him. *[Iolante faints.]*

Markwald. See to her who faints.—
Sire, from his mother's sight to pluck the child
Thus roughly with such threat—

Emperor [pointing to Sybilla]. She does not faint.
Mark you her glaring eye.

Markwald. My liege, the guilt
Lies not on that young head : it lies with those
Who harbour'd him. I do beseech you, spare
(You soon will be a father) the young prince.
I shall not ask you mitigate your wrath
When it lights true on the thrice-damnèd heads
Of Margaritone and . . . my wife.

Emperor [to Celano]. Ha, ha !
Celano, you judged wrong ; let's wait to see
How a true Teuton tramples down his heart
'Neath the mail'd heel of his conscience.—For the boy,
He's mine to crush.

Sybilla. If you would shed his blood
In my sight, that were a boon. O God, I feel
The seeds of frenzy quick in me. Chains, chains
For the wild beasts at my brain ! God, call them off !
I must keep wit for cursing. Lunacy
Will eunuch my revenge.

Emperor. Give her a cell.
 Keep in light bonds her daughters. [*Exeunt, guarded.*
Markwald. Now we pass

To other pris'ners. Margarito is
 The arch-conspirator, and has seduced
 A noble woman from her wifely faith.
 Let the slow fire consume him !

Margarito. Merciful,
 To blazon forth my fate ! I could not choose
 Death more significant. I fain would speak
 While the faggots pile ; I have but two requests :— [*The Em-
 peror takes the forged letters from Celano ; they talk apart.*]
 That my heart be given Clara, my betroth'd,—
 The girl who set her country o'er her love—
 Look for it in the ashes ; it will throb
 Laid in her faithful bosom. I applaud [*Markwald shudders.*]
 Her action, tho' it dooms me to my pyre ;
 'Tis mated by *her* nobleness, who snapped
[*Turning to Iolante.*]

For her country even a more sacred tie,
 And for Sicilia with rent bosom braved
 Taint of a word that kills her as unchaste,
 Iolante—

Markwald. Let the fire consume your lips
 For playing with that name ! Leave me to doom
 What of mine own is guilty. Lead him out
 To the red stake. [*Exit Margarito and Guards.*] Iolante,
 you must die.

Iolante. Most willingly ; bind me to that same pyre
 We both have merited.

Markwald [*furiously*]. What, with him still !
 Is torture sweet with him to share it ? No.
 You shall look on unhurt and see him die,
 The next day suffer. [*To Emperor.*] May I ask the block
 For her ? The bitterness of death is past
 When she's seen the traitor blacken at the stake,
 For whom she brought dishonour on my house.

Celano [*aside to the Emperor*]. Oh, it's a private grievance ;
 never think
 He'd send her to the block, but for the shame
 Margaritone was her paramour.

Emperor. Your private grief
 Heal, cauterize at will : for us we'd give
 Free pardon to so fair a miscreant.
 Nay, we make intercession :—prison her,
 After she's seen that fellow to his end,
 And give her time for penitence.

Markwald. She dies.
Iolante, will you speak ? Have you requests ?

Iolante. My lord, you have done justly ; I deserve,
 As a state-culprit, death. Mar not your deed
 By thought of private vengeance. Oh, believe,
 You offer a pure victim to your God,
 Or the sacrifice avails not.—Promise me
 I may have burial in your vault, the place
 That is my right : there, Markwald, you will come ;
 We shall be reconciled. You cannot bear
 To be answer'd by a woman. I will lie
 Quite still, and you will call me by that name,
 Of which I have not lost the chrism-grace,
 Wife—Iolante.

Markwald. I dishonour not
 My ancestry with a dissever'd head.
 You shall not lie with them.

Iolante. Then, sweet my lord,
 Let Sicilia take my body as my life ;
 Her vilest ground is hallow'd. Fare ye well.
 Clara will comfort you ; she suffers most.
 Don't tell her how Margaritone dies ;
 She'll think all's ended.—I am ready quite
 To see the patriot lighted to his God ;
 He whom I love I leave in torture here ;
 My Markwald, Heaven grant you clearer sight !

[*Exit Iolante attended.*]

Markwald. Is the Court over?

Celano. The rebellion is
Methinks pluck'd up by the roots.

Markwald. 'Twas not to you
I spoke. Tear up those damnèd forgèd lies.
I thank my God they have condemn'd no man ;
Each has confess'd his treason : thine the vil'st,
Who mix'd, dissembling, 'mong the wretched bands
Fooling and cozening them,—and thine escapes.

Emperor. Softly, good Mark ! Celano serves me well.
Iolante—

Markwald. I've a boon to ask : none speak
That name : remind a bastard of his birth
Sooner than a dishonour'd man of her
He has miscall'd his wife. There's much to do ;
The city is unquiet ; I will set
A guard at the southern gate.

Emperor. Nay, Markwald, take
Some rest !

Markwald [*looking back at the Emperor*]. What rest ?
Rest in the lonely grave
From which I've banished *her* ? I'll keep the gate.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Balcony overlooking Margarito's pyre.*

Celano [*looking at Markwald, who is walking round it*].

The fires are dying down. What's blasted him ?
Is it the bolt of Heaven ? Wounded pride ?
He's built on Henry's favour. Good my Mark,
The Emp'ror shall disgrace you. God may scar,
The royal woodsman sunders you at base.
To-morrow, when my last great victim falls,
My wedding-day, the triumph were complete
Did not a rival's shadow cross the throne.

[*Enter the Emperor.*]

Emperor. Peter, it's out ! No Teuton can withstand

Sicilian arts ! Markwald's been prowling round
 That pyre to see
 Justice on Henry's murderer ?—the bones
 Of a dead rival. He's for Tancred's line
 Hot as was Margarito. There he stood
 And blubber'd like a baby. I recall
 His words, "The deed is devilish ; you blind
 The child, but not men's judgments, seeing eyes
 Condemn your deed."—I'd have such eyes put out.
 Imperial policy. . . .

[*The Fool bursts in.*]

Fool, are you crazed ?

Is the Archbishop hanging by the leg ?

Fool. It is not that. Lord Markwald set me on
 To watch it all—

The pretty lady Iolante stood
 So white and cold against the flame. I ran
 To play wi' the little prince, but others came
 Gave him hot sport.

Celano. Your folly's lost its wits. Poor fool, you've
 miss'd

The jangle of your bells these last twelve hours.

Fool [*to the Emperor*]. I am a boy ; master, be merciful.

Emperor. You shall be whipt, till you cry out yourself
 For mercy. [*To Attendants.*] Get him flogg'd. A fool
 implores

Mercy for such.

[*Exeunt Attendants with Fool.*] My anger is confirm'd.

I tell you, Markwald is remorseful now
 For kindling those spent faggots. As they bore
 Sybilla to her cell, a cry was heard :
 "Markwald, my boy's grim father, you'll revenge."
 He breathed deep in reply.

Celano. Has anything,

My liege, miscarried that I undertook ?

To-morrow Iolante dies : he waits

To see her pass ;—the State dispenses with

His ocular aid henceforward. What, you start !
 We'll merely blind him, for his sympathy
 With those dead rebels ; 'mong the ruins there.
 He's dangerous ; a bandage for the eyes
 Secures his loyalty, so saves his life.
 I would not have you doom him to the block
 For sake of ancient service. Yet a word,
 My liege ; I craved an audience to ask
 A private favour of you. Will you deign
 Visit my house to-morrow ? No more blood.
 We'll give you change from this grim festival,
 The scaffold's ; to my bride Veronica
 I will conduct you.

Emperor. You have had enough
 Of these cursed marriages.

Celano. Veronica
 Must be subdued ere the rebellion end.
 I marry her and then—

Emperor. Well, you've the brain.
 I owe you much, and you shall have your whim. [Exit.
[Enter Veronica.]

Celano. Veronica—and frozen to the scent.
 She'll never drop her leaves for misery
 Like the little fool Azaire. A perfect pride !
 And not one stone
 Left on another, when the world again
 Looks toward the edifice !—Alas, how few
 The moments we can give to love. You're pale.

Veronica. We wed to-night ? To-morrow to the king
 You will present me ?

Celano. Yes, I sent you word
 The marriage would not be before the Court,
 The king has so scant leisure ; yet he greets
 My bride the first day of her state.

Veronica. The priest
 Stays for you at the altar, with the friends
 I've brought to witness it.

Celano. You're poorly clad
In this white gown.
Veronica. Could I look more beautiful?
I thought not when the mirror faced me.

Celano. True.
A touch of humbleness would perfect you.
Must Beauty always grow on pride's stiff stalk?
You are impatient; but I am not dress'd
As bridegroom. Stay awhile; I'll come for you
In the dove-colour'd robe. *[Exit Celano.]*

Veronica [looking out wildly]. The fire is dead;
It leaps not to reproach me. I am hard,
I have no pity; I am only glad
As it had ceased to lighten in the sky
Because the thunder flutters me. It's still.
I am at last about to be his wife
(There's terror in it, in my only hope!)
The blue eyes that he's borrow'd fascinate;
They're borrow'd for my wedding. Andrea
Had that cold glance—I thought youth's chastity
Till he look'd down on wreck'd Veronica
Aloof and critical.

[Re-enter Celano.]
Celano. This hand is ice
Within my fingers.

Veronica. But the wedding-ring
Will give it warmth, my lord. The priest attends. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III.—*A Cell. Iolante and Gaoler.*

Iolante. At ten i' the morning—when the day has pass'd
Its early youth and looks as old as I?
You will be there?

Gaoler. Your lord will see you pass.

Iolante. Lord Markwald!

Gaoler. Doom'd for clear disloyalty;
They found him raking out the traitors' ash.

Iolante. Is he to die?

Gaoler. They'll blind him, when he's used
His eyes to-morrow; 'tis his own desire
To keep 'em till he's seen all have their due.

Iolante. Would I might be his executioner!

Gaoler. Lady, you have no fear; there's some of us
Will use him roughly.

Iolante. You have been my friend.
Now listen; try to understand; he judged
Us rightly. I was a conspirator;
Margaritone was of blacker dye;
He kill'd us for his country; but he loved.
He cannot over-live us. See he die.

Gaoler. Sweet lady—

Iolante. Is he not your countryman?
You Germans do not falter. For his land—
He served it to the sev'ring of his heart;
But do not doubt he loves Sicilia well,
And therefore must he die.—Oh, see it done!
Touch not his eyes till his o'erstrained soul
Break from its prison.

Gaoler. Nay, I promise you.
I have authority.

[*Exit.*]

Iolante. Then now to sleep
For this one night alone.

[*Lies down on a pallet and sleeps.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Street in Palermo. Enter Markwald and Warders.*

1st Warder. We'll stand in the shadow o' the wall; 'tis a hot sun.

2nd Warder. Good sir, we pause.—He might be walking in his sleep.

3rd Warder. After a manner 'twill be always so when he's got no sight. Poor gentleman!—an' I so timid at darkness, 'cause of ghosts an' foul dreams. An' there's no cock-

crow to his sort o' sleep ; till the last trump. All dark—
night, day, an' the grave.

2nd Warder. Do you dream ill ?

3rd Warder. 'Till I scream like a houseless cat at mid-
night. I dreamt last night of a bloody gibbet, an' the devils
making their tongues red. My wife says 'tis the wine ; but I
hold 'tis my kind o' head.

1st Warder. Saints be thank'd ! I'm sober in my sleep.
Stop, sir, don't stumble ; here is better shade.

Markwald. The sun is cover'd by yon dome. Bright
Heaven,

I'll make my own eclipse !

2nd Warder. But just in time. Look out—

[*A procession begins to appear.*]

Poor soul !

Markwald. The axe !—

It points not to my heart.—The other way !

And there—

[*Enter Iolante attended.*]

Why did they let her dress herself in white ?

No matter. She is nothing.—Would these windows

Were broken into shivers ! [*To Warders.*] Pleasant shade !

Iolante [*kissing his eyes*]. Alas, they have been ever
blinded. See !

Thy Iolante, going to her Judge,

Dares thus, with blessèd wifely privilege,

To kiss them.

Markwald. Surely these are faithful lips

That press so firmly ; little constant lips

That have not said what's wicked.

Iolante.

Never, never !

Markwald. They'll leave me the poor lids that you have
kiss'd,

Light of my eyes !

Iolante. Tho' everything 's dark,

I'll see for you from Heav'n.

Markwald.

God bless you.

Headsman.

Lady,

We wait no longer.

Markwald. Iolante—wife!

[*Exeunt Iolante and procession.*]

These hateful eyes, like lights above the marsh,
Mised my love. Oh, take me to the place
Where I can get them quench'd.—Ay, there's the flow'r
That, when I pinch'd her mouth into a pout,
She mimick'd and she call'd it *Snapdragon*.

3rd Warder. Here, shove me with your shoulder an' I'll
pick it from the wall. Then—march! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*A lordly Room. Veronica before a mirror,
superbly dressed. Enter Celano at a distance.*

Celano. There are dark lines round her eyes; she's won
her goal.

She says she is my wife. 'Tis manifest
She loves me; I shall see now if she'll bear
Disgrace with me,—or if it be the name
She sought but to recover.—Why not wear
That string of pearls I deck'd you with last night?

Veronica. Will you not put it on?

[*Gives him the pearls. As he clasps the necklace, a tear falls
on his hand.*]

Celano. D' you give me liquid pearls? I ask no price
For my necklace; 'tis a gift.

Veronica.

Why, so am I,

Celano; I have given you myself,
Body and soul:—there is a look in your eyes
As you had bought a slave-girl.

Celano.

I have pride

In my most rare possession: lift your eyes,
We need their sapphire—or the marble cheek
Repels from kissing. See the king attends!

[*Enter Emperor and train.*]

Do I not give you state? That haggard brow!—

Fie on you for a bride !

Veronica. Oh, mock me not !

Celano. My liege, it is a strain of courtesy
To pay us bridal honours, while the town
Is still unsettled, from the cares of state
Sparing an hour to taste your subject's joy.

Emperor. Sweet lady, by my royalty, I'm glad
Faithful Celano hath so fair a wife.
Had you been found my enemy—

Celano. Perchance
I may bespeak a place for her beside
The queen, reward for her meek loyalty

[*In low voice to Emperor.*

And frankness ; she has scrupled not, my liege,
To lend her hand to the creative work
Of the forged letters. Ay, a goodly hand
That will not blush at falsehood. [*Presses it.*] Does it hurt,
This wedding-ring ? You wince. I'll take it off.

Veronica. Leave jesting. [*Aside.*] God, what part am I
to play !

There's the very look in all that crowd of eyes
I saw when they degraded the wrong'd priest.

Emperor. My queen needs tendance, for her hope is soon
To give my lands an heir.

Veronica. Most joyfully
I shall attend her Highness.

Celano. Heaven grant
Your hopes prosperity. Wilt please you pass
Where my poor bridal off'rings are set forth ;
My bride exacts such homage. [*Leads Veronica to a table
richly laden with jewelled cups, fair array, etc.*] Ah,
a thing

Of ancient admiration—coveted
How long, that cross of *lapis lazuli* ?

Veronica [*not heeding him*]. God ! Andrea's first gift,
torn from my neck,
When . . . I'm his wife, he'll not dishonour me :

[*aloud*] I like the fashion of this cup—'tis well.
My liege, what think you of it?

Celano. All this while
You're speaking in a tongue that irks the king.
Discourse to him in German.

Veronica. That must be
As my lord finds teachers.

Celano. Oh, I've thought of that;
And to begin with, there's a German girl
I've chosen to attend you, with regard
To accent. [*To Servant.*] Will you summon Madeleine?

[*Madeleine enters, with a child in her arms.*]

Veronica [*glancing at her*]. My lord, what is 't you do?
Some paramour
Brought to insult me?—Oh, oh!

Celano. Madeleine,
Defend yourself, declaring who you are.
Madeleine. I am his wife, and this his lawful child.

Celano. Truth, girl! And this *my mistress*.

[*Pointing to Veronica, standing superb among her jewels.*]

Veronica [*clutching a small jewelled dagger and stabbing
Madeleine*]. Now your wife. [*Falls senseless.*]

Celano. Look to the babe; it is my lawful son;
Heaven grant it be not hurt! Veronica,
We'd lived in lawless love, my peerless one;
I never would have banish'd thee.

Servants. Alack,
The babe is dead.

Celano. What, kill'd—my young Azairé!
Murd'ress, 'tis you who crush'd it, and she's slain.
I'm baulk'd. Do you think I want your services,
You maudlin wretch? Hence, blunderer—your hire!

[*Re-stabs Madeleine.*]

Adheld [*pointing to Veronica*]. Now she's not here to
chide me, I'll avenge.

Her prayers delay'd this tragedy. [*Stabs Celano.*]

Celano. Well done!

Adheld, it would have been
 More Roman to have bid you hold my sword
 While I fell on it. One thing I command,
 You close my eyes now shuddering from light,
 And, pardon'd by your murder'd master, live
 My faultless squire.

[Dies.]

Adheld. Oh, kill me from his sight !

[*Turning to Veronica.*] But Heaven ! She wakes.

Veronica. Bring me my husband, quick.

Adheld. Alack, sweet lady, he is dead.

Veronica. Oh, then

I am his widow ; see they bury us

In the Cistercian Chapel side by side.

[Dies.]

Emperor. O dignity superb !

[*To Adheld*] Of the dead pardon that accords you life
 We'll reap the profit : let your tongue give clue
 To this dire tragedy. What drew your lord,
 A man whose nature was not of the clime
 Where tears are foster'd, to sob o'er that babe,
 And with such fury pierce your sister's heart ?
 Celano, your domestic policy
 Is grim and dull. Why did he stumble thus ?

Adheld. My liege, his one thought betwixt state affairs
 Was of this lady [*turning trembling to Veronica*] ; her he
 dearly loved,

Loved vainly as a boy—was spurn'd ; he found

His younger brother, since a monk, had won

Her secret love, and vow'd to publish it.

The lady then entreated him to wed

And shield her ; but he fear'd she sought his name,

Indifferent to his love.

[*Enter Messenger.*]

Emperor. Who seeks us thus ?

Messenger. Markwald is dead. As they were blinding
 him,

He fell upon his torturers and used

Their instruments—not to put out his eyes,

But, as he said, his life.

Emperor. Markwald is dead !

It was a threat.

Messenger. The order was most strict.

Emperor. Celano, ah, I fear 'twas jealousy !
You would have been the highest in my love ;
To you I owe my kingdom.

[*Enter an Old Woman.*]

Old Woman. O my liege,

You have a son.

Emperor. Now by my fatherhood, I feel the clue
To this dark maze. Celano, your dead son
Shall have a tomb next to the solemn vault
Where majesty is laid. My lords, away ;
This is no fitting chamber for the news
Of the queen's blest deliv'rance. Let us go
Greet our young prince. [*Exeunt all but Adheld.*]

Adheld. Now I may close her eyes.

SCENE VI.—*A Chapel. Midnight. Veronica and Celano, superbly dressed, on biers. Moonlight falls on the floor of the Chapel. In the distance by the dimly-lighted altar Monks are chanting; they approach. A few remain grouped round the bier; the rest retire.*

1st Monk [*to a brother who rises from his knees*]. Thou
hast not wander'd from thy pray'rs ?

2nd Monk. But once,

To see the soul for whom I sought release.

3rd Monk. They say she is not the true lawful wife.
She had a fearful pride ; the Emperor
Was smitten with her beauty, and allows
This stately burial as she were his bride.

2nd Monk. A mighty temptress ! By St. Benedict,

I had to shut my eyes to pray for her ;
Satan is in me yet.

1st Monk. The funeral
Is to be full of pomp.

2nd Monk. She should have been
Herself the Empress ; she's imperial ;
Her brow a crown, and her thrice-coiled hair
A tiara of gold ; her hand
Is Venus-white, half azure from the sea.

1st Monk. She's but a comely woman, touch her not ;
The image is profane.

3rd Monk [*to 2nd Monk*]. Your watch is o'er.

1st Monk. Take no farewells ; but go and scourge
yourself.

This is a sinner's corpse.

2nd Monk. 'Tis beauty's shrine.

3rd Monk. She died, they say, of stifled jealousy
As 'twere by her own hand : she's in the flame.

2nd Monk. Oh, happy to encircle her ! In hell
There must be rare encounters. I will go.

[*Enter Andrea.*]

Andrea. You all of you may rest. I'll watch and pray,
And guard the dead till midnight ; then, return !

[*Exeunt Monks, carefully veiling the corpse.*]

To be again alone with her ; in truth
She has protection in her husband,—ah,
Death now has forced him join a brotherhood
Denied all earthly pleasure : ne'er again
He swore should I behold this blessed one,
And now, so she is gracious to my suit,
My fasting lips shall banquet on her cheeks
While he lies there unfeasted. [*Touching the grave-clothes.*]

How the folds
In shimmering creases fall upon her breast,
I dare not touch them. 'Tis as when I climb'd
The trellis to her room : she lay within,
So solemn in repose, so beautiful,

I held my breath and worshipp'd. Suddenly
 She waked,—ah, God, if she had been afraid,
 Entreated me to leave her,—but she smiled,
 And as a queen bow'd o'er me in embrace.
 I dare not lift this cover [*grasping the cover on her face*];

I might meet

Repulse ; the dead can look forbiddingly ;
 I had forgotten she is lying dead,
 And I must pray for her . . . Oh, presently.
 But first

I'll see they've laid God's image on her breast,
 And kiss—the crucifix ; then spread the cloth
 ' Twixt me and her and get me to my pray'rs.

[*He draws aside the face-cloth and passionately kisses her.*]

Oh, Christ ! And you are buried as *his* wife ?

Mine, mine ! Receive me !

[*He falls in a swoon on the body, and dies.*]

[*After a long pause re-enter Monks and their Superior.*]

1st Monk. How's this? The devil hath been tempting him.

3rd Monk. He's push'd aside the cross ; he's in a swoon.

2nd Monk. Methinks the face looks softer. Can it be

The lady hath revived ?

1st Monk [*turning the face of Andrea to the moonlight*].

Poor soul, he's gone.

2nd Monk. See ! he has caught her hand, the ring hath
 slipp'd.

All. Most wonderful !

2nd Monk. Good father, do you note ?

Superior. Too young, too young our brother was to watch.

He to his Church, his spiritual land,
 Hath been disloyal, cleaving to his love.

All. We shall be charm'd unless we fly the place,
 Entrancèd by the devil.

Superior. *He is lost.*

Fetch a low bier ; and lay him at her feet.

Chant soft as ye retire to cleanse the air.

[*Exeunt solemnly chanting.*]

SCENE VII.—*Outside the Walls of Palermo. A desolate country, strewn with bones and ashes; Clara sitting by a mound. Enter Sybilla.*

Sybilla. He broke from me—the wild fantastic lad.
I'll sit down on the refuse. That's a grave !
Are you not smiling there? A pretty mound
Of flow'rs and my boy's body safe beneath,
With no more cruel torturer than the worms.
Oh, I would rest beside it and laugh so !—
Like the fool.—He's in the Alps,
Blind, mutilate, and motherless,
The man-child of my womb. If they'd give him me
To finish the wild work, so one by one
I'd pluck the senses out ! He should not hear.
You'll find the scars of his shrieks about my heart—
Nor touch with seeking hands. I'd bury him
Wholly alive. What are you doing there ?

Clara. They cast the ashes here ; I pick them up.
They say full fifty men were burn'd alive ;
There are bones too . . . and trinkets.

Sybilla. Burnt to clear ash ! What all the misery ?
Go, score your brow with them and comfort you.
Is it possible to turn fine gold to dross,
Degrading nature ?

Clara. I deliver'd him
To justice,—he was treasonous. I loved
My country. . . .

Sybilla. You're that German girl who brought
The patriot Margaritone, thus
To dust ?—the harlot !

Clara. Here are double rings,—
One black and rusty, but I recognised—

They're our betrothal rings. I am his bride.
 You speak the truth to call him patriot ;
 He died for his country. Oh, thou widow'd land,
 Thou art sad for him, thou hast large space to mourn ;
 Poor little Clara with her cònfined heart
 Dare not receive such sorrow.—After death,
 Friends go away ; one comes to wash the corse ;
 There's in me that fidelity to cleanse
 The death-sweat from the brow, prop up the chin,
 Set the lips straight for kisses. Things being thus,
 I stay
 To cover up the ashes. I shall wait
 Till the vine smothers up the spot, and then,
 When the last offices are done, I'll go
 And die in my own land. *[Burying some ashes.]*

[Enter Fool.]

Fool. Come away, mother,—mother, come away,
 My folly's gone from me, my childishness.
 I'm the little prince, your son—in motley too
 To make you laugh—the Prince ! Just see me dance.
 Mother, I'll make you fool first, then I'll go
 And pray for you in a convent. Don't you stand
 To see them burn. . . . Mother, they took the fool,
 A boy too like myself—you must not see—
 After they blinded him, I stole his cap
 And little motley coat—
 To dance before you that you may not see ;
 And the bells, bells ; mother, listen !

Clara. Are you a queen ?
 Have you escaped from hard captivity ?

Sybilla. I am a queen. Oh, you say wisely, you
 Vile doggish creature, snuffing at the grave
 Of your dead hero—verily a queen.
 I came here for the air—the sweet soft smell,
 Like violets, of my Sicilia's corse.

Fool. Lady, I brought her here, for she cried for the
 country ; 'tis a jest, for the country is the fields and the

scaffold. Margarito asked for his country and they gave him a bundle of sticks. I take the lady to the green fields. Come away, mother, to the fields !

For the country is where it's green all day,
And cannot be where it's red ;
The country is where it's green all day,
And so still, because one's dead.

To the country, come !

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